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ABSTRACT

The four issues of the journal SKOLE published in 1997 contain articles, personal narratives, and interviews about small alternative schools, home schooling, educational history, the deficiencies of public education, and educational philosophy and innovations. Major articles include: "The Creatures They Are: Children Becoming Their Nature" (about imagination) (Richard Lewis); "Eyeless in Gaza" (about literacy) (John Taylor Gatto); "Notes on My Trip to Waabno Gamaak: Helping To Change a School from an Authoritarian to Democratic Process" (Jerry Mintz); "I Went to Seven Different Elementary Schools" (Arthur Gladstone); "Hanging On at the Edge of the World: Teaching Writing to Urban Special Needs Youth" (Barbara Geis); "Breaking the Silence of Violence: Teaching Our Children New Strategies" (Michael Massurin); "Sharing One Skin" (about the Okanagan Indian community) (Jeannette Armstrong); "So Are You a Teacher, or What?" (Bill Kaul); "Like China in the Bull Shop: Classroom Accidents Waiting To Happen and Downshifting into Boredom" (Robert L. Kastelic, Kathleen McLinn); "Emily's Tree; Imagination and the Soul of Learning" (Richard Lewis); "Competition, Conditioning, and Play" (John Chilton Pearce); "A School Must Have a Heart" (Chris Mercogliano); "Montessori & Steiner: A Pattern of Reverse Symmetries" (Dee Joy Coulter); "On Conflict Resolution" (Bill Kaul); "School Is Bad for Children" (John Holt); "'Partial Vision' in Alternative Education" (Ron Miller); "Impatience" (John Potter); "It Takes a Community" (Sarah Scott); "The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace" (M. Scott Peck); "Why I Believe Attention Deficit Disorder Is a Myth" (Thomas Armstrong); "Elizabeth Byrne Ferm, 1857-1947" (Alexis C. Ferm); "Our Solar-Heated Bio-Dome" (Ted Strunck, Jane Strunck); "Radical Democracy and Our Future: A Call to Action" (John Taylor Gatto); "'Lifelong Learning': A Holistic View" (Nathaniel Needle); and "Receding Yet Again. Then Dissolving into Imaginary Gelatin" (about teaching) (Bill Kaul). This journal also contains poems, student writings, interviews, letters to the editor, and reviews of books and videos. (SAS)

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

The Journal of Alternative Education

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

We are uniquely honored to have in this issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* the gracious contributions of three New York City luminaries from widely differing fields of experience in relation to the issue of children and learning. First comes a fragment of our interview with our former neighbor, ex-governor Mario Cuomo (for the *Journal of Family Life*) which reflects his humanistic oversight of the lives of New York's children, and most particularly, the lives of children like the child he himself once was, whose vulnerability and need cry out so clearly for nurturing attention! The entire interview can be seen in the winter issue of the *JFL*. See page eighty for both an ad and for information on how to order this issue or a subscription.

The second illustrious contributor is Richard Lewis, whose work with children in conducting his Touchstone Center in New York I have admired for over a decade! Our interview with him involved his making a trip up the Hudson by train, which he tells us he loved doing because it brought back the pleasure he once felt making that same trip to and from New York as an undergraduate at Bard College in Poughkeepsie, midway between the two cities.

The third contribution comes from our dear friend John Taylor Gatto, that passionate uncaped crusader and seeker for the truth about institutional schooling and the real extent of the damage engendered thereby to our democracy itself which informs every word he writes! This piece, taken from the fourteenth chapter of his forthcoming book, *The Empty Child*, is no exception! We count ourselves astoundingly fortunate to be able to call John our friend!

Other articles in this issue which follow these three notable pieces may not involve quite the same level of public recognition, but are no less relevant to the concerns of families with children, no less poignantly heartfelt. It's an outstanding issue! But wait!

* * *

The glory of this issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* so far in no way must be allowed to overshadow another dazzling event that has occurred to us editors/publishers at Down-to-Earth Books in a (to me) totally mysterious and magical concatenation of circumstances—an event I can only present epigrammatically, chronologically AND graphically if we are to grasp its full scope.

Herewith:

Some are born great; some achieve greatness; and some have greatness thrust upon them!

... Or so I choose to think about what has happened to us, the publishers of our two quarterly journals! Substitute "recognition" for "greatness," and it may make more sense to you. Which would be good, since it still hasn't sunk in with us! Not fully! It's like a dream come true! I'm still reeling, pinching myself every hour on the hour!

My oldest son Bill is a software researcher/designer for GE's medical viewing systems—CAT-scan, MRI and a new one in progress based on ultrasound. So he has astounding know-how PLUS highly sophisticated equipment to work with. And he's a computer languages specialist. So ... what would be like unaided levitation to the moon for me to consider, let alone accomplish, Bill has done seemingly effortlessly and in the twinkling of an eye! I think it actually took a lot longer, but he did it so gracefully and without demonstrating an iota of braggadocio, it seemed a twinkling to me!

Well, that's the start of this miracle, and would be, seemingly, enough, one would think. But along comes Kirsten Holmquist-Sutherland from the University of Chicago, with whom I've been in correspondence by e-mail ever since she and Todd came to the Berkshire Live-out last summer, and put me in touch with Monica and Mike Bonney, who are setting up a Web page for the Sudbury Valley schools. Because, you see, one needs a host in order to be accepted as a www dot commer, unless you are prepared to pay through the nose—or so I gather.

With Kirsten's encouragement, I wrote Monica (e-mail), and got a gorgeously enthusiastic welcome for our project! So I put Bill and Mike in touch with each other, and page two will give you a faint—a VERY faint—impression of what the Web page will look like! I say faint, because what you see here is Bill's first version. Since then he has done several things. For one thing, he reversed the fore- and backgrounds, so the images and text are against a black background—very vivid. But THEN, he did them in color! And has a couple of pages, one of which contains images of FOUR issues of the *JFL*, each of which can be clicked on to bring up a larger image the text of which can be easily read! So look:

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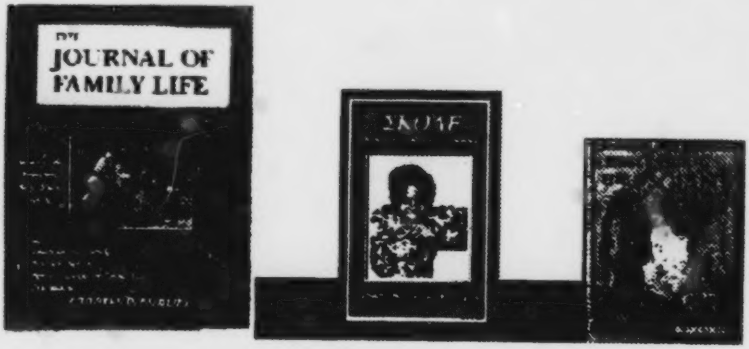

The Journal of Family Life, a Quarterly for Empowering Families. Nominated for the *Utne Reader* 1995 Alternative Press Award New Titles. Quoting from the review in *Utne Reader* by Andrea Martin: "... In this era of so-called family values, misplaced religious ideals, and misused statistics, people involved with the Albany, New York, Free School have come forward with a magazine offering an outlook that is both truer and richer. The Free School people have been walking their talk of respect for and faith in human nature since the 1970's, and they offer companionship and support to all who treasure family life as an opportunity for authenticity and growth ..."

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The web page will have links, underlined words or phrases which, when clicked on, offer the viewer connections to other potentially relevant topics, such as Jerry Mintz's AERO web page, the Sudbury Valley web page, the Hegeners' Home Education Magazine *if they want it, a choice of articles drawn from either journal—and other possible connections, virtually without limit!*

For the first time I am beginning to grasp the potentialities of this on-line spider web. I find it pretty scary! But not scary enough to back out—that's for sure! So keep tuning in for the latest.

Special Readers' Section

LETTERS; SCHOOL REPORTS; CONFERENCES:

Here's a very special letter from a very special person who, along with her husband Chamba, truly understands, feels, thinks, acts—all of the above and more!—telling us about her (their) new school. As you will see, Amy is a beautiful writer! Take heart, all of you who "wish you could write" but fear no one would listen! We are a feeling, heart-centered group, and that is what it takes to be a writer! So please feel free to send us your thoughts, your feelings, your worries! We are here to support each other.

Dear Chris, Betsy, Mary & the whole Free School Gang,

It hardly seems possible that it has been almost a year since we were there. Our building is done (see pictures) and we have had nine full time students and two homeschooling families at the school since September 16. Yea! Now the real fun starts. And it's been a shock for many.

No matter how many times we told everyone, "This is a place where everyone comes up against that place in themselves where they are stuck—adults & kids alike," most everyone still felt shock and betrayal when the honeymoon passed (actually a very nice and extended one) and the real work began. Personal dislikes, fear, anxiety, protectiveness—and that's just parents!

The kids are working through their stuff with (mostly) good humor—again, our best teachers! The reticent ones are learning to come forward; the aggressive ones are learning to temper their power with some awareness of others. School Meetings are great, with kids starting to come alive to the fact that their voice really counts! So used are they to adults giving token choices and freedoms....

We have three four-year-olds (pretty tolerant, for the most part), three eight/nine-year-old girls (watch out!), an eleven-year-old boy (at the moment, quite lonely and feeling isolated), a fifteen-year-old boy and a seventeen-year-old girl (moving through major dramas at the moment). It seems that all possible issues have come up.

There are lots of parents there off and on, and our homeschooling families visit several times each week. Several community members have taught classes or segments of classes. Still, I

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feel spread pretty thin. Chris's book (a thousand thanks for giving us that precious copy!) has helped more than we can ever say to articulate just what the hell we're doing.

Anyway, we wait for issues of *SKOLE* and *JFL* and love to hear your stories there—more than anything else, it is these two publications which sustain us and help to inform our path and dream for community—with all its struggle! Thank you!

Now, for some questions....

The issue of safety keeps coming up—parents wanting safety rules. We are loathe to impose these, and it's becoming a bit of a struggle. Any ideas, articles, resources, etc.?

The variance between home and school—this runs the gamut from authoritarian parents to permissive (not too many respectful democratic families out there). This issue takes many forms—from the kid who says nothing at school, but then tells mom, "I hate school! So-and-so is picking on me!", to distrust of the child.

We are considering a Parent Support Group (similar to your Wednesday night meetings?). My concerns are:

1. I'm not confident in my ability to "run" the meetings;

2. I am unsure how to handle people's firmly held opinions/defensiveness over their parenting styles; and

3. I am wanting to be able to articulate the school's view toward kids; i.e., freedom to make choices and live by the results, not doing for, etc..... I have a feeling there is a sentiment of "Well, that's fine for you at school, but in our house...." Well, I guess these aren't insurmountable issues, and I know that we'll probably just feel our way through, "making it up as we go"...............

I feel our absence of elders keenly. It seems there is no one to anchor us in that way. So people look up in surprise when they feel a negative emotion, or see a child struggling. It doesn't fit their picture of what this nice little alternative school is supposed to look like. You know, sun streaming through windows while joyful learners paint masterpieces in primary colors; parents in community sharing recipes for tofu burgers.

So, reality has set in, and hooray! Because I know that we are here for deeper reasons and that people are working through vital issues, and that community will be born in the midst of some anguish and much more intensity that anyone coming had bargained for. But I have this feeling that some elder presence would help......

Well, here in the mail comes *JFL*—and the theme is Generations! So I shall go off to bed to absorb this most recent offering from your hearts and spirits. The *Bulletin* is still alive, although pushed to the back burner more often than I would like (I am doing too much of the load around here....I need to give it

away... Not sure how). Anyway, I'll be getting an issue out around January 1.

With love, appreciation, and connectedness across the continent,

Amy & Chamba Cooke
31191 Road 180
Visalia, CA 93292

And here's a note (written on the back side of a calendar page for Gary Larsen's "The Far Side!") from a young man several of us from the Free School met at a birthday party for a mutual friend. He learned about our school, came to the "Berkshire Live-Out" the next summer—and every summer since—and we've been allies and friends ever since. Josh is a born teacher who is half of the founder/director team for Pathfinder, a Homeschooling Resource Center. Josh—and his partner Ken Danford—are competent, caring, open-hearted, highly qualified for the work they have begun.

Last year they had tried to start a Charter School in Amherst, Mass., were turned down, so came right back and started this Center, which opened this fall. It has been steadily growing ever since. Their regular notices of activities at the Center are fascinating. They have an extraordinary group of activity offerings and people offering them; and the surrounding families are flocking in! I'd say they have the right *resource, in the* right *place at the* right *time and in the* right *way! But I'd better let Josh speak for himself:*

Dear all,

Pathfinder is booming. We're up to 45 members and more keep on trickling in. The families are becoming invested. Kids are getting their sea legs. And still we've just begun. ...

Peace and love,
affectionately,
Joshua
jhornick@k12.sit.umass.edu

I received the following letter via e-mail last summer from Sandy Wold in Ithaca, New York. She and her family did visit our school briefly in the fall. I had answered as much as I was able of Sandy's questions/comments, and am hoping some of you can also correspond with her. Her e-mail address is at the end of the letter:

Dear Mary,

I am very interested in starting a free and democratic school here in Ithaca, NY, and I would like very much to visit the Albany

Free School in the fall. My name is Sandy Wold and have two children ages 4 years and 21 mos. I have studied the Sudbury Valley School model for the past year and have visited once, and I am ready to pick up where Kay Milling, who attempted to start the Democratic School of the Fingerlakes, left off three years ago. I am sure you are very busy, but I was hoping you could help me find the resources to pursue the following ideas and questions.

1. Could you please send me information on the Albany Free School and a sample of the *Skole Journal*. I am also interested in how you finance your sliding scale! Please help me subscribe to the altschool list serve. I have tried many times and have been unsuccessful.

2. In the next month or year I would like to gather as many interested people together as possible and rent a space (homelike, urban, has access to outdoor play space, and is affordable) to start the first forms of the "Cayuga Valley Free School." Rather than go through all of the legal hoops at first, I'd like to postpone them by classifying ourselves as a homeschoolers' resource center which must meet less than five days a week, I think.

3. For parents who cannot afford tuition, I would like to explore creating a cooperative whereby parents can serve staff hours in exchange for partial tuition credit. This might allow me to possibly work part-time.

4. If the facilities are large enough and appropriate, I'd like to include a subschool/coop where parents of children three and under can meet in a Montessori-like environment. Ideally, this space would be accessible to older children who wish to be around babies and toddlers.

5. I have located a city-owned, dream space at the Stewart Park Boat House. It is a cozy building with a large gym and beautiful park surroundings within the City. It is accessible by bike and bus. The building is preserved by the Historic Preservation Trust and in need of much repair. This fall the City will repair its foundation, but has no plans or committment for the interior. In order to convince the City Council and Mayor to allow us to use it, we will have to come up with a proposal and show our contribution to the City.

6. Do you know anything about any other free schools within eight hours' drive of Ithaca?

Thank you for whatever information you can provide!

Sincerely,
Sandy Wold (slwl5~cornell.edu)
207 Cleveland Ave., Ithaca, NY 14850
607-272-3814

The Free School September 29, 1996.
To Whom it May Concern:

I work in a school in California based on the Sudbury Valley School model. I am interested in promoting diversity in the population at my school, and am wondering if you have written anything on 1) How you keep tuition low; and 2) Anything else you have done to make your school receptive to people from a variety of backgrounds. I appreciate your help!

Michael Levy
854 Western Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Brian and Kathy Kearsey moved from their California home to Brewster, NY expressly for the purpose of starting a school that fitted their inner convictions. Their experiences so far in attempting to gain acceptability, let alone encouragement, from the local authorities has been shocking—to them, and certainly, to me. Let's give them our support! As Amy Cooke points out, the reality of a school can be very far from its original conception, and making it work requires a lot of faith and courage! Hang in, Kathy and Brian!

THE CROSSROADS SCHOOL

Route 6, Brewster, NY

by Brian Kearsey

My wife and I founded Crossroads to nurture our family. It's a private school and homeschool resource center serving children from three months old through high school. The name reflects our philosophical synthesis. We've been certified Montessori teachers for fifteen years, draw on ideas of the Waldorf schools, and love interacting with homeschool and unschool families. We cherish the living principles Christ teaches because we see them at work in our hearts. We also gain invaluable insights from Judaism and eastern religions. We prefer natural, organic foods to processed fare, and homeopathic books are our medical resource of choice. Yet our three-year-old can still spot a Burger King a half mile away on the highway, and we sometimes find an antibiotic is just what the (western) doctor ordered. As active artists we understand life is a work-in-progress. As teachers and parents we strive to remain focused in the moment, addressing each child as a unique individual.

-x-

I co-founded and directed an internationally acclaimed, one-room school in California before returning home to New York. It wouldn't have raised an eyebrow to walk in and find a mother suckling her newborn on the couch next to me as I helped a child with fractions, a college student playing peek-aboo with a toddler, a grandparent discussing mutual funds with some highschoolers, a twelve-year-old leading an art project with preschoolers, and a kindergartener whining at mom. Crossroads will have the same loving, home atmosphere where all enjoy the blessings of multi-generational interactions daily. There's no need to sequester children into narrow age groups, the natural rhythms of the day provide sufficient opportunity for age-appropriate groupings.

Most children attend full time, some only for classes like Karate or Spanish. We offer as much academic organization as particular families desire. We're comfortable doing all the academics, assisting homeschool parents, or just facillitating spiritual development. Most parents expect a healthy blend of academics, though our unschooled students find they lack for naught. The children have no trouble accepting the different approaches to education; in fact that's partly what makes our school so uniquely stimulating.

Traditional methods often meet rudimentary intellectual goals. Yet at best, they undermine the true nature of children. Discipline is externally enforced by the almost total curtailment of the God-given rights to speak, move, and choose. Isolated, often dull facts are imposed on children, who are treated as passive receptacles. This desecrates the verb "educate," which literally means "to draw out," not stuff in. With virtually no voice in how, what, or when they learn, children endure in spiritually barren soil. We can't know the dreams and talents that never blossomed as a result of the artificial demands, labels, and schedules of the mass-production assembly line called school. Sadly, even a cursory study of its origins reveals our system was designed to inhibit individuality and creativity.

The truth is children love to learn. It's a basic human instinct. We needn't sacrifice intellectual prowess to raise children who have grace enough to heed the whisperings of the muses rather than be swept along by social currents. Elementary education should be a fun, spontaneous quenching of natural curiosity. For these ages we use a weekly guide to ensure no academic area is ignored, but within this framework encourage children to pursue their own interests in an environment ripe with choices. Our job is to guide, not dictate. Respecting the divine nature of each child, we are humble enough to constantly question our assumptions about how to enhance each unfolding spirit. We individually tailor our program to complement the unique talents of each child, who has direct input.

As we learn to respect and trust children, they learn to be respectful and trustworthy. We encourage balanced, reflective living, and from this state of mind keeping pace academically is almost effortless. Our children who take nationally normed tests do very well because true intelligence is flourishing. Academic growth flows as a desirable tool needed to explore the Universe, not as the goal itself. Instead of demanding blind conformity we cultivate intelligent cooperation. Internal discipline is fostered as children practice speaking intelligently, moving gracefully, and choosing wisely. Some individuals thrive with minimal structure; others need more. Actions have consequences; intelligent choices expand freedoms while poor choices limit them.

We observe and kindle spontaneous curiosity, helping focus and ignite it into a blaze of true learning. The mysteries that surround us provide an inexhaustible source of fuel to keep it burning. Our class radiates an aura of harmony because love, joy, and wonder motivate our daily exploration of these mysteries. We've no need to choose one religion. God's physical laws govern the universe and we use the three R's to study them. His spiritual laws govern our souls' incarnations with the same certainty, and we strive to live in harmony with them. By relying on intuition to guide intellect, the physical laws commanding the planets to remain in orbit are dwarfed into proper perspective. Our family can concentrate on viewing the world through the innocent eyes of our children. That's education!

History is a living drama to be actively participated in. We study it to grasp our role in writing tomorrow's history with our lives. We study great individuals of history and consciously try to emulate them. We practice wielding the powers of freedom within the parameters common sense dictates. This allows the genius within each child to unfold itself naturally. The results are obvious to everyone who spends time with us. Please call or visit if you have ideas to share or would like more information!

Bill Jawitz is the Director of the Odyssey Community School in Manchester, Connecticut, and author of the 1995 high school text Understanding Mass Media. *His article on his new school speaks for itself.*

STEPPING OUT OF THE BOX

by Bill Jawitz, Director

Hello...Is anybody home? About once a month I wake up asking myself that question. After all, I must have been nuts to exchange the in-the-box certainty of a tenured salary for the out-of-the-box uncertainty of life in the wilds of school reform. It's been a year since I resigned from my job teaching media studies at a successful suburban high school in Manchester, CT to start a small independent secondary school using the study of media and hands-on learning as the hub of its curriculum. So here I am, in the midst of an amazing adventure that I wouldn't trade for the world.

Since last July, I've been working with thirty talented teammates to create The Odyssey Community School. Our board of trustees contains representatives from higher education, nonprofit organizations, a curriculum supervisor from another district, two former members of Manchester's board of education, and prospective parents. Our 18-member advisory council represents a diverse group of professionals (e.g., a university dean of admissions, our cable provider's community programming coordinator, and the director of a statewide school reform organization). Our staff meets regularly to wrestle with questions of standards, outcomes and methodologies and somehow, out of the resulting intellectual ferment, to create a curriculum that will serve and inspire our students, their families and our community.

Several core beliefs undergird our effort. We believe, for example, that post-industrial education must reflect and help shape the new information age that is transforming society. We believe that students should be given meaningful opportunities to practice democracy in school. We believe that human beings learn in many different ways and at different rates. Accordingly, our school will celebrate these differences within a rigorous core curriculum. We believe that subject areas should be connected to each other. We believe that school should connect students with their community fundamentally, not peripherally. We also believe that our future depends on children thinking independently and asking probing questions.

This vision of education took root in me twenty-two years ago. At the age of fifteen, I became another anonymous casualty of my public high school, and I ended up in a very small private school where an English teacher recommended *Teaching As a Subversive Activity* by Neil Postman. As confused and academically disaffected as I was at the time, I felt a powerful connection with Postman's ideas about institutional paradigms, pedagogy, and media culture. I devoured several classics of the era (such as *How Children Fail and 7he Lives of Children)* went on to study education philosophy and media literacy.

So why did I resign after ten successful years of teaching? Because I could not create the program I envision within the existing 2000-student high school where I worked. Despite isolated successes within the bounds of my 45 minute classes, *I yearned for a school-wide environment that would support my beliefs.* I had been studying school reform efforts, attending conferences, and visiting break-the-mold schools for the last four years. Although my principal, superintendent and Board of Education Chairman were very supportive of my initiatives over the years, they could not ultimately carve out the autonomy or dollars to implement the program we're now developing.

So, with their reluctant blessing, I stepped outside of the box. (I actually had a dream in which my principal was standing at the stem of a supertanker trying to steer it with an oar), and I realized that systemic school reform is going to need both patient leaders guiding from within and less patient agitators pushing it from the outside.

It continually amazes me how so many thoughtful people are hungry tor genuine school reform. It's been easy to attract terrific people who are eagerly contributing energy and wisdom. Fortunately, we have undiscovered counterparts all around the country: people just like us, waiting for an opportunity to fashion unique learning environments willing to take on the immense challenge of starting a school.

With only 16 months until we open with about forty sixth graders, we face many hurdles (we expect to grow into a grade 6-12 school with about 150 kids). For instance, we are in the process of conducting market research that we trust will confirm the strong parent interest we've already encountered. We have been planning to launch as an independent school with a tuition that aims to be about the same as our state average per-pupil cost, but this will not generate the financial aid we need to provide as many scholarships as we want to. As a result, we're looking at alternative models such as the "I Have A Dream" program in order to achieve the socio-economic diversity we seek. Obviously, raising capital is always a tough job, especially as a start-up, although we're encouraged by our early efforts. And finding a suitable site (such as a vacant office building or car dealership) involves, among other factors, getting approval from zoning, building and fire officials. On top of all this, Connecticut has a new (but very limited) charter school bill which we are examining with great interest.

So, we press on, confident that the time is right for the emergence of out-of-the-box alternatives, and confident that the Odyssey Community School will be among them.

* * * * *

NEWS FROM THE HOMESCHOOL FRONT:

Here's an e-mail press release we received from Olivia Loria, Director of Pinewood School in Pine, CO. Olivia, founder of Pinewood, was also a president of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools during the eighties:

HOME EDUCATION CONTINUES TO GROW

Clonlara School of Ann Arbor, Michigan has announced its consolidation with Pinewood School of Pine, Colorado. This will provide Clonlara School with a western United States school and office. Two of Pinewood's staff, Olivia Loria and Judy Gelner, both experienced and highly regarded home school advocates, will now be part of Clonlara School. The Pinewood School's curricula are being revised for Clonlara's families.

Recognized world wide as a leader in the alternative education field, Clonlara serves over six thousand students in over 20 foreign countries, making it the largest home/alternative schooling organization of its kind in the world.

The Pinewood School acquisition will benefit parents in the region with easier access and support to Clonlara's programs. Clonlara's original growth centered around the Great Lakes Region and has grown to include offices in Japan and Bermuda within the last year.

Founder/Director Dr. Patricia Montgomery attributes Clonlara's success to the unique services which Clonlara School provides to parents who opt to home educate. "When parents discover the options available to them, when they choose alternative education," Dr. Montgomery says, "they soon discover the solutions to the educational needs of their children."

One option available through Clonlara School is the Clonlara School Compuhigh Program. Compuhigh is the first ever high school over the Internet where students can earn high school credits from their desk top computers. This program has drawn attention from the MicroSoft Network as one of the leading education web sites on the Internet.

Dr. Montgomery also reports that Clonlara School maintains an ongoing communication with groups in Newfoundland, Japan, and Israel. People all around the world continue to seek solutions to our educational problems. Clonlara's response is to keep administering to the needs of home school parents and students in as many new ways as possible.

Contact:. Clonlara School, 1289 Jewett St.,
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104; 313-769-4515

* * * * *

And from my homeschooling friend (via e-mail) Linda Dobson, who is also news watch editor for the Hegeners' **Home Education Magazine**, *a conference report:*

The National Homeschooling Association Conference in Becket, Massachusetts, October 23-25

Reported by Linda Dobson

Boy, Mary, I didn't even get there until the 25th!!

Yes, I believe it went well. (Jerry [Mintz] came to my workshop so you'll be able to get an impression from the other side! And let me know—nobody handed out any evaluation sheets or anything, and I personally find them very useful after the fact.)

Attendance was quite disappointing, yet the smaller numbers allowed for a more intimate environment, for conversation, dining as well as group get-togethers. The work was intensive, which I enjoyed, broken up nicely (and necessarily!) with fun and games. And the site is beautiful, the weather absolutely perfect, enough so so that several sessions were held outdoors in the sunshine. (Oh, yeah, the food was great, too!)

The NHA is determined to put together a collection of reports on the workshops to share more widely—I hope there's some kind of market for the report after all the hard work that will go into it.

One of the nicest parts for me was meeting all the people with whom I've had so much contact over the years but have never met face to face, including Jerry, Pat and Day Farenga, and lots of e-mail friends. And, of course, seeing others whom I haven't seen for years, like Larry Kaseman, Susan Evans, and Dorothy Werner. (Sure wish you had been there.)

Also got a chance to speak with a couple of gals from the Rochester area who, like me, are concerned that NY still doesn't have a strong, non-Christian organization or even an alliance of support groups so that strong networking avenues are in place in time of need. I intend to contact Seth [Rockmuller] regarding this and hopefully discover his and Katharine [Houk]'s intentions regarding their work in this area.

Thought about this most of the way home. If, in fact, something else must grow as a result of need, and given the political climate regarding education, I've been thinking that a *new, improved* association should include not just homeschooling groups, but private and independent educators as well. I'd love your input on this, Mary. I know there's AERO and NCACS, but is there anything already in existence at the state level, particularly something that is ready and willing to protect our freedoms should those evil politicians start flexing their muscles? And what do you think of yet another attempt at state unity?

As always, hoping something good and something more comes of everyone's efforts. Hope you and yours are well and happy, and looking forward to hearing back from you.

For the children,
Linda
Ldobson@aldus.NorthNet.org

And here's a delightful letter from Dayle Bethel in Kyoto, Japan:

Dear Mary,

Just received *Skole* and the *Journal of Family Life* and send this note of thanks. We are delighted and encouraged by the success of both magazines. I never cease to marvel at the quality of the contribution that you people of the Free School Community have made and continue to make to movements for transformation and a sane world. Blessings to you and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Dayle Bethel

Phone/Fax: 81-75-722-2373
E-mail: dmbl9@mbox.kyoto-inet.or.jp

The following is a letter shared by Paul Houde with his father Frank, who is a member of the editorial staff of both ΣΚΟΛΕ *and the* Journal of Family Life. *Paul's article describing an exploit he had masterminded as a student at Arthur Morgan School appeared in the fall issue of* ΣΚΟΛΕ, *and Frank passed it on to us. We felt the entire transaction reflected the true quality of this school, all unbidden as such, and thus merited publication. Other material about this school appears in both volumes II and III of* Challenging the Giant, *written by one of its founders, Ernest Morgan, as well as by teachers and students.*

Arthur Morgan School
1901 Hannah Branch Road
Burnsville, NC 28714, 704-675-4262

Dear Paul,

Our copy of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* came this week and what a surprise to find your article in there. I am planning to read it to the students. The tradition of doing something productive on a sneak-out has continued but one we have to explain over and over. Your description reinforced that in so many ways, including the satisfaction of doing something for the school that was a surprise by the students instead of a requirement of them. I was also interested in the fact that your father is now involved with this journal. Our students had poetry in an issue two years ago. ...

In peace and friendship,
Joyce Johnson,
[staff member]

* * * * *

Questionnaire responses:

I recently sent out questionnaires to subscribers whose renewals were impending, and received some wonderful responses, a number of which felt so significant, I wanted to share them with the rest of you. For reasons of space, I'm only including some of the responses to the first question in this issue, but I will continue to publish more of them in future issues. And thank you all for taking the time to respond!

Question one, and the answers I received back, follow:

1. Are you still concerned about educational issues in general? What kinds of concerns do you have? Do you still hope alternative education can help bring about reforms? Please add an extra sheet if you don't have room enough to express yourself fully. I promise to read prayerfully

anything you send me, even if I don't necessarily agree or even like it!

• I am interested in education that is democratic and empowering. I am interested in ways to "do" education that honor participants' whole selves and the wholistic nature of life. I revel (like a pig in a mud bath) in examples of the above, and in accounts (tales, anecdotes, poems, papers, articles, etc.) that celebrate our spirituality, the earth and the seasons.

As a graduate student, I am particularly interested in rituals (classroom or otherwise) that help to create a community of learners. I am also interested in education within the context of intentional community. If there are any sources you might recommend (back issues, articles, etc.), please pass them on.

I truly appreciate your pioneering efforts and to all of you

☆ HOORAH! ☾

Judith Elford **[Thanks, Judith!]**

And here's one from John Potter, Kyoto, Japan:

• Yes, of course, I'm still concerned. I hope (and think) that 'alternative' education can eventually be accepted as 'mainstream' education but I think the whole way we think about children and their upbringing will have to change (see Alice Miller). This doesn't mean it can't be done!

[Editor's note: Alice Miller is the author of **The Myth of the Gifted Child** ***and other powerful books about the "de-authentication" of children by adults. I agree it's never been enough just to "re-school" the child in an atmosphere of freedom that ignores the rest of his family—not even Summerhill (John once taught at Summerhill)! The continuity of culture springs from the continuity of the generations within the family, as Robert Bly points out so poignantly in his new book,*** **The Sibling Society.** ***See the winter issue of the*** **JFL** ***for an interview with Bly and a review of his book- and see John's account of his "freedom in education" class with Japanese university students in the Summer, 1996 issue of*** ΣΚΟΛΕ. ***Thanks, once more, John!]***

• Yes, yes and yes. I would love to read more stories about the Free School and other Free Schools. ... I loved your stories about foreign students (Japanese) and their place in the school. More interviews with school founders. I like the *Journal of Family Life* interviews. *Kirsten Holmquist-Sutherland.*

[We'll be doing interviews in all the adult issues from now on. I want more about new schools too, Kirsten, and am grateful that more people are starting schools. We need nitty gritty tales about real people—at least as much as we do philosophical treatises on how to do education. Starting a school is not an easy thing to do. Keeping it going is even harder!

Allen Parker in Cambridge, Mass., writes:

• I'm very concerned about education issues, especially how to encourage youth to be introspective and intellectual in the face of all the multimedia stuff now in their lives. I think many approaches are needed to education; alternative ed. is very important.

[Thanks Allen, and thanks for hanging in with us! How about an article?]

Alma Rodriguez, from Jersey City, NJ, writes:

• Yes! Your mag was an inspiration to open a cooperative preschool.

[Hallelujah, Alma! Keep it up! Let us know how you're doing.]

Diana Sottile from Mill Valley, California, writes:

• ... I am a brand new 3rd grade teacher in the non-alternative system.

[Thanks for responding, Diana! Stay in touch!]

Sara Schneider writes:

• Yes. I am a 20 year old student at the University of Michigan. I found you guys when I was in high school after becoming determined to start a "free school." After 3 years I think I am coming back full circle to education. ***[Wow, Sara! Come visit us!]***

Dorothy Werner from Chicago, a long-time homeschooler and leader in the homeschool/alternative education movements, writes:

• Yes—am simply buried in political stuff. I definitely think there is hope, especially if we can hang in.. ***[Thanks, Dorothy!]***

Britta Fairfield from San Rafael, California, writes:

• Yes, I am still very much interested in alternative education and very much enjoyed reading "Managing Money" in the last issue of the *Journal of Family Life*. I am currently studying "Multiple

Intelligences" and their application in the classroom. I am hoping to start my own "free school" next year. ***[Yay, Britta!]***

Michael Mann, from St. Paul, Minnesota, writes:

- Yes—I am currently homeschooling with my 15 year old daughter, 10 year old son and the 3 1/2 year old hell raiser. We talked 3-4 years ago. At the time I was involved in trying to create an alternative governing structure for St. Paul Open School (public) and got "banned" from St. Paul Public Schools as a result. Thus homeschooling.

I am still very interested in alternative education, see home schooling as a piece of a great puzzle. Also, in a year or two, when the 3 year old settles down a bit, I will be returning to some kind of volunteer teaching, maybe in the homeless shelters, or else I will be experimenting with some kind of store front school (this is my daydream while I sit and play "animals" with little Leo.) I think home schooling is one part of a wide range of learning projects—using schools, mentors, apprenticeships, drop-in centers etc., where school takes place wherever a person chooses. Ever so slightly organized but always a step beyond itself (says my horse to your tiger).

[I remember very well! It was the eloquence of your deeply thought-out responses, more of which will appear in future issues, as much as for any other reason that I realized how important it is that we all share our thoughts, dreams, concerns, anguish, hopes and fears with each other! Thank, thanks. Michael]

Em Pariser writes from Camden, Maine:

- Of course I'm concerned—my big worry at the moment is for my child Eben and others like him who "don't fit" the overshoe of public education and yet I'm not willing to give up on the "beast" either (Public Ed., I mean).

Christina Stefanek writes from Mountain View, California:

- Yes. My public school experience as a child was dismal. I imagine it's gotten worse. With two small children approaching school age—and a growing homeless population, violence increasing among urban poor, exploding global population, etc., how we educate, "school," care for our children is tremendously important!!

Peter Burns writes from Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont:

• Yes. I am very concerned about education in general and especially with the direction our state government is forcing public schools. The Vermont government has adopted some really great educational practices like utilizing portfolios or teaching to standards (rather than criteria) and not only made them into mandates but coopted them to promote the ideals opposite to those these practices try to further. I am searching for alternative educational ideas, techniques and practices that deepen and enliven the educational experience for students.

[Here are two others I liked very much and (sob!) I didn't write down the name that went with them! Please write again, dear subscribers, and give me another chance. Remind me who you are! We all need to know each other.]

• Yes. My main concern is that our government with the President as our leader is on the "wrong track;" continuing to value external, standardized curriculum. I want freedom, choice, responsibility for the child. ***[Me too! Thanks!]***

• Yes. Same concerns as always! Only public schools are getting worse. Charter schools are hopeful. The system needs to give more local on-site control. Vouchers are still a good idea.

Thank you all for offering us your thoughts and concerns. I find it totally inspiring to discover how many thoughtful, involved people are out there, doing what you can!

And here follows a real sharing of heart feelings and wisdom from John Potter, Head of the New School of Northern Virginia, in response to the following excerpt from the new volume (III) of* Challenging the Giant, *which I had put on a list of e-mail addresses of alt. ed. folks (See also Em Pariser's review of the new volume starting on page xxvi below).*
I'm sharing this critique with you because it rings so true, but also because it may have relevance to many of "us," may be one of the sources of what Mary Anne Raywid once complained about in regard to us "alt. ed." folks: namely, that you cannot tell us much, because we "know it all already." My experience tells me it's true! Bill Ellis tried to say the same thing to me—that I published a lot more grousing about what was wrong than I did about what can be done about it!

Not to be confused with the John Potter I sometimes call JP2, who lives in Kobe, Japan and is also English in his country of origin, a teacher and a man of discernment. See JP2's questionnaire response on page xx, and his splendid article on a class in educational freedom he gave recently at Kansai University in Japan in the summer, '96 issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*

Both right. Hey, we need both perspectives, but in a more balanced context, okay?

So here's John's comment. It stands on its own merit, but it would make even more sense if mine were included, so I'm adding it to the back of the issue, starting on page 110. I invite your responses, and will publish them in the summer issue unless specifically asked not to:

Mary:

There is not a word in what you write that I disagree with, but it is overwhelming. I have made a lot of these observations independently, but am as yet unable to find a way to address these issues without becoming dire and dramatic and that is a turn-off for many people. What I seek to achieve, and have not really moved an inch in getting there, is something simple, clear and extraordinarily forceful to all audiences—a kind of literary bullet to the head of these frustrating forces. It is important to remember also that there, but for the grace of God, go we. We are fortunate to have the perspective we do, and we are freer for it.

It seems to me that avoiding harsh criticism, or at least dovetailing it with other responses would be most effective. Few people in these educational bureaucracies Gatto refers to are happy, and they get very defensive when attacked. They circle the wagons and find no end of rationalizations to both justify their positions and to discredit ours in their own minds. I am not sure there is anything inherently evil in these people either. For want of a better word they seem.......well...immature and maybe dealing with them should be much like dealing with say a kid who is smart, but unhappy and also immature. A non-threatening approach which offers inspiration and invites them indirectly to get inspired (indirectly because it needs to be their idea).

It has been my experience in theVirginia suburbs that parents, parents, parents often are a big if not the biggest part of the problem. They really want the school systems to be the way they are simply because that feels safe to them, the systems are familiar to them, and when in doubt or when one is not sure what to do, what was ok for you will probably be ok for your kids. None of these parents wants to think of themselves as educationally and psychologically disadvantaged which from our perspective many of them are. They want to think of themselves as ok, so if they, in their view, are undamaged then their kids won't be damaged by a similar experience. In fact they will probably be improved by the experience—discipline, tenacity, surviving the odds. It is the mindset which sees the world as a dog-eat-dog place, competitive, exacting, unforgiving and the kids better learn about that and the sooner the better.

The notion that school be nurturing, supportive, happy, sharing, interesting and exciting—a place which helps kids grow strong through positive force, is wimpy, indulgent, a bit wacky and they reject it. The real key is to getting parents in the population at large to think differently about what is good for their children and to realize that what is good for them is very very different to their notion. We also need to remember that this awful point of view we all rail against so strongly was very often formed out of love for their kids. They really do want the best for their kids. The forces forming their reality and the way they have interpreted and processed these have simply coalesced in a very unfortunate way, and it is epidemic and it is nationwide.

My small effort to make a difference has so far really been self-education in interviewing countless parents and coming to realize what so many of them are really thinking. I have responded to these folks in many ways and I am trying to synthesize a coherent literary bullet, because if we get the parents' hearts and minds, then school systems will be unable to resist their force and their message.

I'll leave you with a short story about one of my students, who, after a two or three years at The New School began to complain that she wasn't learning anything, and after all, isn't that what school is all about. I asked her why she felt that way, and she indicated that she was having too much fun in class. She was about to finish seventh grade and this was the time for her to get serious about learning. The New School wasn't for her, she had to go some place that was different, not so much fun—serious about education—some place that hurt a bit. Her wonderful parents suggested that if that was what she felt, then maybe she should get some achievement testing done so that she could get a handle on the educational price she had paid for this fun. So she did and found to her astonishment that she was ahead of grade level (for whatever these silly tests are worth). That changed her view. With that proof(?) she could believe in a way I could not convince her that the school was fine. She was learning and learning well. She relaxed and continues to do wonderfully.

Much love,
John

Write to John Potter at jpotter@nsnva.pvt.k12.va.us, *or visit his web page at http://www.nsnva.pvt.k12.va.us—it's very beautiful!*

And don't forget to read my intro starting on p.110 so you will have more fuel for your own rejoinder!

I sent an offer for a free review copy of Challenging the Giant, volume III, *to Jerry Mintz's AERO list via e-mail and got back the following letter from Emanuel Pariser up in Maine. Maybe it's really an ad, but the letter is so lovely, I'm putting it here. (P.S. The offer still stands. I'll send you a free copy if you'll review it for me! But here's Em's, which can't be bettered, so yours had better be good!):*

Hi Mary,

I'll be glad to review it, but what kind of venue? I could try for the local newspaper, or the NDPN newsletter, or the Journal of At Risk Issues, any ideas or leads? I always find myself settling down with both of your journals when I should be doing lots of other things, and finding something in each one I like, especially ole' John G. He is like the story of how the Rhinoceros got his skin, he gets his sweet bread crumbs under your skin, and its irritating that he can do that so well—and I love his erudition, even if I disagree with his conclusions frequently. Graduation soon, you've got to come up some time for one.

Love,
Emanuel

And Em wrote this review and sent us a copy:

"RETURN OF THE GIANT"

CHALLENGING THE GIANT: THE BEST OF ΣΚΟΛΕ,
THE JOURNAL OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, VOLUME III
Down-to-Earth Books,
72 Philip St., Albany, NY 1996 $15.00 pb

Reviewed by Emanuel Pariser
Community School, Camden, Maine

Volume III of *Challenging the Giant: The Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education*, is now officially out. Weighing in at 492 pages long the wonderfully diverse range of authors sculpting its pages range from Zöe Readhead, A.S. Neill's daughter, writing about her father, to home schooler Rebecca Furbush-Bayer on the imperiled European Wolf, to Ron Miller and John Gatto verbally duking it out over whether public schools are redeemable or not.

Mary Leue, the editor and founder of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* and the Free School in Albany, has the knack of inviting people to write—

whether they be 5 or 50—anyone who has something to say, something they mean sincerely, can say it in *ΣΚΟΛΕ, The Journal of Alternative Education.* This "Best of" collection is divided up into ten sections including: profiles of alternative schools around the country, essays by teachers on learning (several delightful chapters from Chris Mercogliano's newly released *Making it Up as We Go Along—The History of Albany's Free School*), student writings, some gripping John Gatto polemics, writing as usual like a butterfly but stinging like a bee, and some pieces on the "Plight of Our Children."

The voices and points of view filling this edition are ones not usually heard from in "mainstream" discussions of education. They are impassioned, dedicated, disgusted, learned, stimulated voices who are writing to communicate, to vent, to celebrate, to broaden their experience and those of their readers beyond the bounds of their own personal horizons. No one point of view dominates, no one writer gets top billing, no particular vision is put on a pedestal. But there is an urgency to what is said—an urgency which is evident for those of us working with children and adolescents in and out of schools, which grows each day; an urgency which these assembled voices embody. It is an urgency which begs for action.

As Mary exhorts us on the book's back cover: "Don't just sit back and stew....Take back your power! ... Make a start now by deciding what you really want (for your children), then begin working to figure out how to get it." Meanwhile order a copy of this book from Down-to-Earth Books.

Down to Earth Books, 72 Philip Street,
Albany, New York, 12202
pb $15.00 + $1.50 s& h

Emanuel Pariser
Community School,
Camden, Maine

A week-long gathering we call the

Berkshire Live-out

coming, Sunday, July 22 through Saturday, August 2!

We are a growing group of people of very diversified origin who have come to believe that our national educational problems are not very likely to be resolved in the near future—perhaps not even in our generation—which is a pretty sad commentary on our country's capacity for problem-solving, but probably true! We've chosen to approach educational problem-solving on a human, relational level, believing that real learning comes out of an atmosphere of enjoyment by families and community that fosters the joy of discovery! And because we love gathering with each other every summer!

This is the fourth summer in a row that we've gathered, from as far away as California, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Maine, and as near as the nearby village of Ashfield, to talk together about problems, share ideas for support, make plans for change, clarify issues, listen to each other's experiences, eat, play, swim, walk in the woods, visit the local attractions, make friends, learn—about ourselves and each other, about kids, about how schools manage, about what helps, about how others have dealt with the problems that have floored us—about whatever concerns people come with.

Sometimes educational leaders join us: John Taylor Gatto, Pat Farenga, Jerry Mintz, Jon Scott, Ron Miller, Sandy Hurst, Kate Kerman—and we hope for participation by their likes this coming summer as well! But in the long run, these issues will be addressed and finally laid to rest when families decide the time has come for change that benefits all children, not just a few! And that means you and me.

We keep costs very low so as not to exclude anyone, and even the low costs we do have can be set aside if money is a crucial issue for anyone! This is not about money! So—give us a call (518-432-1578), and we'll put you on the mailing list for a notice when the time gets close.

Love from the Live-out family—from Albany, New York who host the Live-out at Journey's End, in Ashfield, Mass., and points north, south, east and west.

We decided to start out the body of this issue with two interviews. The first, with New York's ex-governor Cuomo, who used to be our neighbor, is short, since it is only the first part of a longer conversation with our favorite statesman.

FRAGMENT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH GOVERNOR MARIO CUOMO

by Chris Mercogliano and Mary Leue

Governor Mario Cuomo: Tell me about your group.

Chris Mercogliano: Well, it all emanates from the Free School, which is on Elm Street in the old St. Anthony's School building. I don't know if you noticed it, but I used to see you walk by every now and then and I don't know if you noticed it there. It's a red brick school building in the lower block of Elm, just above Grand Street. It was founded in 1969 by Mary Leue, who is sitting right next to me and I will introduce her in about one more minute, but she started the school back in the late 60s because it just wasn't working at all for her son in the Albany public schools.

She had no luck in working with the schools or anything, and she finally just kind of gave up and started to teach him at home. That grew into a school of about fifty children today. We're probably the oldest inner-city, independent alternative or Free School, depending on what nomenclature you want to use, in the country. An unusual school; we're not funded by anyone and yet at least half of our students are from very poor families and then the other half are from middle class families from all over. It's an interesting marriage, and just a very unique school in a whole bunch of ways.

Then when Mary Leue retired from everyday teaching, maybe twelve years ago, she started the *Journal of Alternative Education* which goes by the classical Greek word for school which is *ΣΚΟΛΕ*. She set up a whole desktop publishing empire in her home on Philip Street. She's been publishing that journal for all of these years.

Gov.: I have a question for you about your school. What government assistance do you ask for?

C: Well, none really. We don't ask for any; as a non-public school we get some minor entitlements along with the Catholic schools and so on, we get a little bit of money for textbooks, a little bit of money for science equipment, computer software. I mean, I stress *little*, a couple of hundred bucks.

Gov.: Do you get management money? I remember we added some money once; I looked for every constitutional device to help the private schools.

C: You're right; it increased dramatically over the years. We just don't get much because we're so small. We only have fifty kids; that is our maximum, fifty is our max.

Gov.: Well, yeah, but now there is a big push toward the charter schools. The charter schools are inches away from your notion. The charter school is a public school as I understand it, I mean it is a general concept, but it is a public school that is separated from a lot of the current requirements and it is able to make its own judgments about how to educate its children as long as it meets certain fundamental prerequisites. You are very close to that.

C: I would say so. But I would say that we're pretty far out there on the spectrum. I'm not sure. People have put in charter school proposals in several states. We've become a bit of model nationwide, even worldwide, and people have called us for advice on putting in their charter school application, and when they have followed our model closely they have been rejected. You see, the children in our school have a great deal of autonomy, a great deal of freedom, and I think that is just a little too far for most public school districts to handle. I think it is frightens them a bit, so those proposals have been rejected. Some that are a little more moderate are accepted. You see, we don't grade the children, we don't believe in standardized testing. I mean we go a little too far—you know what I mean?

Gov.: Yes.

C: But otherwise, essentially, I think you are right, and we're very interested to hear how these schools that have been set up, how they are working five years down the line. It is a little too soon to say. What do you think of the idea?

Gov.: I encourage innovativeness, because the public school system is not working as well as it should. I have a different emphasis, though, than most of the public school advocates. People are inclined to think of two systems in the United States, the public and the private. And the general notion is that the private is stronger, for whatever reason, then the public. And I think that that is not an accurate description. I think there are three systems: there is the private, which is stronger *generally* than the public because of demographic reasons and economic reasons and a lot of other reasons. Then there is the public, that has within it two school systems: the public school system for people who happen to be poor or in a poor neighborhood with a low real estate base, and then the people who are in the public schools but happen to be in a wealthy area like District 26 in Queens County, where there is good solid middle class strength, stability, strong families and even some wealth. In those places in this country, and especially in places like New York State, the school system is good to excellent, the public school system.

C: Exactly.

Gov.: And so it's false to describe the public school system as failing. It's correct to describe the public school system which deals with poor and lower middle-class people as failing. And the reason for that probably has a lot to do with sociology and the family conditions and disruptiveness and all of that.

C: Prejudice; I don't think you can leave that out.

Gov.: Yeah, and so the charter school notion, if it could be fashioned to deal with things like Frederick Douglas Academy in the middle of Harlem, which is a public school, a magnificently successful experience, mostly because of two things: a women by the name of Monroe who is the principal and a dynamo, and wonderful parents who are totally committed to their kids—that approach to charter schools in the poor areas is very appealing to me. Anyway, there is so much to do, the one thing that I was pleased about last night (the last night of the 1996 Democratic National Convention), most pleased about was the President spent nine minutes on education in his speech.

C: Definitely hope in that.

Gov.: Well, he didn't go as far... I have been pushing him for a long time to get up and say I will do for education in this country with John Kennedy did for space, which would set us on the track to making us the best educated people in world history, which we're not now, and we have no excuse for not being. Whether you do it as you're doing it, or as the nuns at St. Monica in the old days in my neighborhood did it, or the way PS 50 did it, we should be the best in the world.

We have all the wealth, we have all the power, we have all the knowledge, and we're giving money away to absurd things like the defense budget—twenty billion dollars more then the Pentagon asked for. To give them twenty billion more than they asked for, and not give every one of your kids and every kid in America a computer or access to a computer is, just to me, a ridiculous misallocation of our strength. Anyway, that's my speech.

C: I want to introduce you now to Mary Leue, who is seated right here to my right.

Gov.: It's a great pleasure.

M: Thank you. Well, mine as well. As Chris mentioned, I have been publishing *ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education,* and I would love to publish those words of yours about schooling in the next issue, with your permission, and it would be there rather than in this interview, but they are too precious to let go, since they are, in a sense tangential to the interview we want to focus on for the *Journal of Family Life*. Is that all right with you?

Gov.: That's fine.

You may read the rest of this fascinating interview in the winter issue of the Journal of Family Life, *whose theme is "Fathers." If you're not already a subscriber, use the information on page 81, remembering that if you're already a subscriber to* ΣΚΟΛΕ, *adding the* JFL *will only cost you $10 extra for a whole year—four issues!*

Richard Lewis, our second interviewee, is the founder and director of The Touchstone Center in New York City. He has pursued two major interests: creating many books and developing the art of teaching. His most recent book is WHEN THOUGHT IS YOUNG: Reflections on Teaching and the Poetry of the Child *(New Rivers Press). The Center helps children in elementary and middle schools express their experiences through the arts, using themes and images of the natural world. His work as a teacher was documented in a film entitled* THE JOURNEY WITHIN, *produced by Renascence Films and a winner of a 1991 Ciné Golden Eagle Award. Because we see this material as extraordinarily important, and because the interview was a long one, we decided to serialize it in two parts. The second part will appear in the spring issue of* ΣΚΟΛΕ.

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD LEWIS

by Chris Mercogliano and Mary Leue

C. I wanted to start by telling you that my class of five- and six-year-olds and I market-tested your book, *All of You was Singing*, this morning, and it came out a winner! And I know it was written for older kids, not kids my kids' ages, but they loved it! They were absolutely riveted on it, except for just one little part right in the middle. So how did you come to make that book?

R. It was originally a theater piece I did a number of years ago.

C. But you wrote it as a children's story. It has tremendous pictures. It's the Aztec Creation story.

R. Yes. Ed Young did the illustrations.

M. Chris, you said there was a little too much in the middle for them to follow?

C. Too many words.

M. The reason I'm asking is that in school so many things are age-graded for kids. The way I came up, my father used to read to us all the time, my mother too, but very often it would be my father, all six of us, and he read us things like *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers*, and, sure, *Winnie the Pooh*. See, my oldest was four years older than me and the youngest was four years younger, so I was right in the middle. And both extremes were equally focused on what was going on.

And my daughter read all four books of *Lord of the Rings* to my son Mark when he was kindergarten age, and as soon as she was done, he started reading, and he taught himself to read, beginning with *The Hobbit* and then going on. And he was a first grader!

Photo by Carol Grocki Lewis

R. Well, this is interesting, because I've never agreed with the age-appropriate idea, because I think that, as you said, Mary, and as you said too, Chris, about your five and six year-olds, I think these children listen for what they are interested in and it doesn't make any difference that it is a sophisticated mythic tale that supposedly is for "older children." They hear what they want to hear and they take what they want to take. I think that, in terms of teaching, I have heard other teachers say that my work is sometimes a little too advanced.

M. That's what I'm saying. They're trained that way.

R. But I think if you look at it the other way around, the children are actually *thinking* about these things in very concrete ways. I don't know a child who doesn't in some way struggle with the idea of why things are, and how they came to be. And isn't that one of the most predominant questions on their mind?

Beginning right from the point when language first comes to their lips, and they begin to grapple with language as a way of asking that question, the language becomes the tool by which they ask the question, "Daddy, how did this happen?; why did this happen?; how did we get here?; and why are you doing what you're doing?" All of those major, major questions which most of us begin to spend the rest of our lives struggling with, in terms of the personal answers to why we do what we do.

C. I think the teaching for me this morning was seeing the way those boys, who are often so wild, and you can say they have no attention span, and all that crap, the way they were instantly drawn in, especially in the beginning, when it was just the earth monster, and it was eaten in two by the serpent. These kids will settle for nothing less. If I try to offer them *The Cat in the Hat*, or some easy reading stuff, forget it; they've got bigger plans than that. And that's when they jump up and start bouncing off the walls and beating each other up. This was forty-five minutes when we were right together grappling with fundamental questions.

R. I think that's where educational theory and all it tramples on, goes off the track a lot; it doesn't acknowledge, it seems to me, the strength of children having this question very much on their minds all the time. The child is really interested in phenomena. Initially, they're phenomenologists. They begin with testing the world around all the time for what it is, and then figuring out what their relationship is with these things.

There's every reason for our going back to your idea, Mary, about having books read to them that are not necessarily in their age range. It makes no difference. Children will grapple with what they are interested in, and make sense of what they feel.

M. And what could be more fascinating than Dumas?

R. It's also the musicality of the language, the beauty of the language, the rhythm of the language, the soothing quality of the language as you listen to it.

M. And your Daddy reading it to you, the joy of that makes it yours.

R. Right; that whole embrace of feeling the warmth of the person speaking to you with a quality of language you may not necessarily get on an everyday basis.

C. Did you start out as a writer? Or a teacher? Or as both? How did you get going?

R. Well, that's always a very good question, because I didn't start out necessarily being what I thought I was going to be. As we all do, at a certain point in our lives, I was struggling for what I wanted to do. I went to Bard College, and when I was at Bard, I had a very strong dual interest between music—composition, in particular—and poetry. And those two facets were magnets for me, at least, at that point in my life, I had no thought of going into any form of education, of teaching; you pursue those interests that you have. But as time went on, what became clear to me—you know, when you don't know exactly what you're doing, a certain accident in your life happens, a certain situation appears, a crystallization of what it is you might want to be doing; an intuitive moment suddenly triggers itself.

My particular moment was when I was working in New York at a publishing house and taking my lunch break. I was in Central Park, and I just had this feeling that maybe I should teach, but I wasn't sure what I was supposed to be teaching. I knew that somewhere in the back of my mind I had a very strong interest in childhood, in children, but again, it was sort of nebulous. I spoke with some friends of mine about it, and someone mentioned a program in New Jersey at an art center, in Englewood. They were looking for a teacher who could work with children on an after-school basis. I was intrigued by that possibility, so I went to see them, and it turned out to be that there was a group of children whose parents who were interested in having an extra class in literature for their children because they weren't necessarily getting the kind of literature in schools their parents thought they should get. One thing led to another, and I said I would be delighted to share my particular interest in literature with the children.

They had no space at the time in their regular workshop area, so we had our first series of classes in the back of an antique store which the school rented out. It was a wonderful place to talk about literature, amidst decaying antiques. It was during those first few days that it occurred to me that this was something I was obviously very deeply interested in. In part, what fascinated me was the distinctive quality of children's thinking which is deeply poetic and concerned with nature, how things are, how things can be explained and expressed, and so on. It seemed to me that even though I brought in all kinds of literature interesting to me, at least, they weren't interested in that. What they were interested in was my talking with them, listening to them, traveling with their questions, and then finding the poems and the stories that somehow worked their way into their interests.

So on your question of how I got started, I would say that's how I initially got my impetus to move in this direction. It also was a way of bringing my personal interest in music and poetry, and language in particular, into some teaching situation where I could test out the instinct I had had about some of my own feelings and ideas for working with children.

M. I'd like to read you something from your article[*]which appeared in *Parabola*, and which I reprinted, where you are talking about

> ... children's natural desire to learn—to move with their own internal impulses to understand and to survive in the world evolving around them and within them. These impulses—and these learnings—are not "schooled" as much as instinctual; they emanate from children, precisely because they are crucial to their existence, not just physically, but as a consciousness becoming aware of itself. In other words, a sense of inner and outer, of thought and feeling, of body and self, in some extraordinary fashion are working together through children; so that, just as a seed begins to assume the form of a tree, they begin to assume the form of their human aliveness.

I don't think I've ever heard it put better anywhere. It's just beautiful! I taught a class in what we called history of religions. It just moved from where the children were naturally. We read and we talked, and I told them stories from the different religions, and so on. It was the most beautiful class I've ever had, because it came from where the children were naturally. I was reminded all over again that you are the only person I've read who writes so vividly about learning as fundamentally an expression of the *organic* in life. Your sense of the organic feels to me to be the essence, the center, of the process of learning.

In trying to understand the developmental process through which one moved from infancy to titular adulthood, I am reminded of Robert Persig's description of the romantic view of life as opposed to the practical level, in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. He is talking about taking a trip with a romantic young couple and how their idealistic view of life seems to have kept them from having learned step-by-step things like motorcycle repair, the ordinary skills they would need to survive in an practical world. And it struck me that maybe teachers are trying to teach children this sort of practical thing—how to survive in a step-by-step world.

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[*] "The Pulse of Learning, "*ΣΚΟΛΕ*, Winter, 1990, pp. 147-53.

But, developmentally, learning is an organic process that involves the body, as you say. Piaget points this out. It has levels, and those levels have to be respected. Persig is saying that by violating these developmentally organic rules of real learning, we create insanity because we teach people to compartmentalize. Knowledge leaves the body out, and you're saying that the body, the feelings, the thoughts are all together, and we're training people not to understand that, not to believe that. I was looking at the institutional implications of that: not only education but medicine, —the way mothers give birth, the way we deal with pediatrics. Doctors, teachers have forgotten to work with people in terms of their organic nature.

How do you teach people to put back the wholeness of life? Do you have some ideas on that?

R. It's a very important question, and a very difficult question to answer. Going back to the first part of the question, how do we get adults to understand their own sense, of the organic? It's certainly a question that I've been trying to struggle with in working with adults, how you get them to think this way, and to view things around them organically rather than seeing things as so separate that there is no way in which the organic actually can function.

The first thing I think one has to do on the adult level is to help people know that there is a problem, to understand that something might be lacking in a certain way, that a certain something isn't in place. One of the ways to do that, on an educational level, is to bring teachers together and have them reflect on the nature of what basic learning might be. Not what experts think it is, but what they personally feel learning is. And then to begin to go into some of those definitions, such as "What do you think teaching means?" "What do you feel it is to be a teacher?"

Initially, as we reflect, you're going to get some pretty classic definitions, but we try to push beyond the classics, into a more personal thing of what we mean by the act of teaching, the act of learning. And don't necessarily worry about whether what you're saying has anything to do with what education is today. You say it as if you could feel it as something that has roots in the way you once learned before the institution of education brought its own body of understanding around what you should be doing.

Coming up on the train this morning, I brought a whole bundle of work to do, with my usual problem of deadlines. I know this route so well, having gone to Bard, so I religiously sat on the left side of the train so I could see the river. And I could feel the tension in my own mind between just literally gazing out the window and letting that river take me, and my other impulse to do this work that I had brought with me on the train. I could hear my mind saying, "Oh, the heck with it, just look out the window!" And I also realized the learning going on in the pockets of my mind as I gazed out the window, my sense of relationship to all that water, the beautiful ways of the flowing of the hills and the Catskills in the background, how important that was. I guess you don't realize how important that is until you don't do it for a while and you don't have it as part of your daily life. Then you realize that something must have been going on in the learning process, the deeper learning process, which was almost the groundwork of how one begins to see things.

And, with children, I suspect that much of their learning takes place in obviously non-learning situations. Maybe 90%, if not more, of their learning obviously takes place in situations which have nothing to do with what we call education, formal learning. It's all of those residues of learning that we take with us as we get older. But very few of us have the chance or the opportunity to tap into some of that baseline, that other form of learning.

Which goes back, Mary, to your question, about the organic sense of learning, where we experience the organic without ever realizing that it *is* organic. It was just happening, just going on; there wasn't an effort to make a cognitive statement about it. It just enveloped one. As the river envelops one as you go down the river, you don't necessarily know what's happening to you. Your mind is moving in many directions. The outside and the inside are meeting in some wonderfully intimate fashion. That kind of organic experience is something we don't often have the opportunity of tapping into in our schools. The urgency of what we have to learn as we get older obliterates much of what we understood when we were younger.

So with the adult, I think you have to find a way of asking questions, in having a kind of informality of thinking that allows people to spontaneously say, "You know, I remember ..." I remember when I was a kid, there was this tree in my back yard, and I used to sit there for the longest time, until my father would come out and say, "What are you doing out here?" and I would say to him, "Well, I'm just sitting." And my Dad would say, "Well, that's not doing anything. Why aren't you doing something?"

I'm interested in adults being able to recognize those moments im which we are really doing something—even though we are in a so-called *non-doing* state. I'm interested in our becoming aware of all the residues of learning going on simultaneously within us, while we also meet all the practicalities of living.

I think we humans are extraordinary in our ability to do many things simultaneously in terms of the learning process. We're able to be in a classroom as children, listening to somebody and at the same time also be listening to something else inside ourselves. And then you can take a segment of what you heard, as maybe those children were doing when you read them the Aztec story, and integrate it somehow into their own thoughts, which may or may not have anything to do with the Aztecs. It's like a beam of light that somehow momentarily hesitates on the edge of a leaf and stays there, and then moves on to something else.

So my suspicions are that we need to see learning as an understanding that our minds do not always work in a particularly logical fashion. In fact, we're sometimes very illogical even when we're trying to be logical, so that the logical and the illogical often support each other. There is a real paradox between the logical and the illogical sense of things, and all of them are operating at different levels at the same time. We are not a ruler that goes from one inch to ten inches. We are weighted down, both upwardly and downwardly, and we move and fluctuate in diverse and marvelous ways as we go through our day.

When you get the adult to recognize those contradictions are all right to live with, that it's OK to function this way, it doesn't mean you're going to cross the street and be distracted, but you can cross the street safely and concentrate and also be observant of or listening to those other levels of thought.

M. So how does this relate to children?

R. Children gradually become frightened of learning that says to them, "You can't understand the world by having this paradox, and you can't achieve success in your learning if you're going to be thinking about something else when you're supposed to be thinking about *this*!", which says that those children,—say, with those five- and six-year-olds of yours, Chris; I suspect you can see it in them—when you're able to allow that spectrum of idea and thought to be out there. Now, the question one comes to, then, has to do with children not being able to focus.

C. I think it's a question of will and intention. In an ordinary classroom, they wouldn't choose to focus ...

R. Yes, on the way they were being asked to do it.

C. Or if I were trying to read them *The Cat in the Hat*. It's not that they lack the ability to focus, if they don't, it will be their way of saying, "It doesn't turn me on. It's not relevant to me."

R. Right.

M. "It's not my cup of tea." But there's no space for that in the classroom.

R. But we can *see* it in the child before that child meets and is exposed to any kind of schooling. I see it in my young daughter, who's just turned four. It's wonderful, if I listen carefully, how her thoughts follow what happens to be on her mind at the moment when she wakes up into her daytime consciousness. It all happens when she walks into the room, she sees something, and suddenly that triggers a thought, and that sort of loops back to a thought that she may have had as she woke up, and that in turn becomes the source of the conversation.

So, if you feel you're playing a four-year-old, then you try to think what happens when children begin to go into organized learning. The teacher might say, "Your thought has too many tangential qualities to it." Well, yes, I guess our thoughts do have tangential qualities to the degree that we allow them to be, but I think the question that arises out of that is, how then, *within* education, in a gentle way, do you allow the marvel of different patterns of thought to interconnect with each other and work themselves out so that what ultimately emerges is a very personal view of the world, rather than simply one that's been required. And I think that's the major question.

Chris: You have a marvelous one-liner in your book, *When Thought Is Young*, that I'd like to quote, the best I've ever heard; so profound. Six words. I'd like you to talk more about it. You said, "Expressiveness and learning cause each other."

R. Yes. The thing I'm struggling with is, what do I really mean by that? What are the implications of it?

C. I think the difficulty is it's that's a non-linear thought.

R. Absolutely.

C. Because reality isn't linear anyway. But there's the challenge of articulation, of language, especially as we have these big neocortexes that lead us around. So, to translate something so nonlinear (I call it "stoned thought"), to linearize that, flatten that out, it's not easy. It's almost impossible, but we do the best we can.

R. Yes. Well, the reason I feel very concerned about this relationship between expressiveness and learning, is that learning *is* expressive; there is no learning that isn't ultimately expressive, and vice versa—that all expressiveness ultimately is a *form* of learning.

One of the aspects of childhood, it seems to me, the function of human evolution, if you will, is that the child is attempting constantly to express itself, and that that expressiveness is not just through language, but, in terms of what Mary was saying about the organic nature of it, it's the recognition of what the hands will do, or what these eyes can do, or what these ears can do. It's in the sense of growing *into* this body, and that this body is growing also, and that in the process, I'm *becoming* someone. And that experience of becoming, it seems to me, has a profoundly expressive quality. It is also, in the same way of looking at this, an act of learning. Because, as I'm becoming this element, *me*, I'm learning this quality *in* me. And this ability of expressiveness *in* me as I'm using my hands, using my ears, using my voice, whatever it is, often at the same time, is our initial, most profound, act of instinctive learning. It's nothing that anybody's taught, nothing that anyone has sat down and said, "This is how you can learn about yourself." It seems to be a wonderfully inner pulsation that moves us through this awakening process in terms of becoming ourselves.

M. And it *is* pulsatory. It's like a heart.

R. Yes. And so that statement that I wrote came out of the struggle I felt of returning to learning its roots in expressiveness, and that the roots of expressiveness are in fact an act of learning. There is a whole movement in art, especially with art educators, who want to move away from expressiveness as a form of learning. Their theory is that we've spent too much time as educators with the expressive element of childhood and that what's happened is that children are undisciplined and don't have a real competence in knowing what art is. What they are saying is, "Well, let's not spend so much time allowing children to be personally expressive through the art process. Let's teach them the discipline of art early on, so that they end up with a very disciplined knowledge of the history of art and their role in relationship to it."

C. That's what Bly is saying, in *The Sibling Society*, a very stark book in which he says that no one grows up any more. We're just a society of adolescents, and our culture is going to hell in a handbasket, so he does make that point, kind of like in basketball, that no one gives back to the game. We're all taking, all enjoying the fruits of the great masters, and no one is bothering to take the time to learn to be that good, to paint at that level, or sing, at that level that the great masters painted or sang at. It's a problem, that our culture is becoming slowly degraded, and that the pace of that is quickening. It's a tough one. Maybe there's a balance there ...

R. Yes, I think there is a balance. And I think the balance really comes in *not* seeing expressiveness as the adolescent who doesn't grow up, who is always in the self-expressive state and will always be adolescent. I would like to think of expressiveness as something beyond just a self attempting to express itself. I would like to see expressiveness as that form of human communication which is attempting to understand, but also attempting to understand what's out there, and that the very origin of language, of our attempt to communicate, in whatever language, be it spoken or written, or the language of movement or sounds or visual symbols, are an attempt in some way to make sense of what is happening within and outside us. Language, whatever form it may take, stultifies if we don't see it as an attempt to make that linkage, as a form of expression, between ourselves and what's also outside. It's a very complicated question, because this whole movement towards national standards is going in the direction of having children at each grade level take on a certain body of knowledge, which can easily work against the individuality and importance of our expressive learning..

C. It's an ancient American strategy. If something isn't working, do more of it.

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We will continue this fascinating conversation in the spring issue It's quite long, very rich and totally relevant to our most profound concerns for our children. We don't want to abridge a sentence of its content!

The article by Richard Lewis that follows is from the summer, 1991, issue of Orion.

THE CREATURES THEY ARE:
Children Becoming Their Nature
by Richard Lewis

Not long ago in a classroom in East Harlem in New York City, a group of seven- and eight-year-olds were struggling to put on brightly-colored bird masks over their small faces. With the help of their teachers, the students tied their masks around their heads. Assured that their birds' beaks were securely in place, they spontaneously began to flutter and dive, chatter and warble, like a flock of newly uncaged birds. In a moment the usual order of the classroom was transformed by swirling arms and cries.

How could these children capture with such dexterity and inventiveness so many different qualities of birds?

In this project, a group of teachers from the Touchstone Center, which I direct, hoped to engage the imagination of children by letting them become something other than themselves. If they could imagine themselves as birds, they could do what birds do so well—they could fly, but in this case, fly imaginatively. We would help them to create a flock of personal birds that would be both an insight into and a metaphor for their own imaginations. The birds they created would also bring them deeper into an awareness of the phenomena of all birds—what they are, what they do, and what they can mean to us.

The children were led through a series of experiences that brought their imaginative capacities in touch with what they already knew of birds. Our first day in the classroom, we talked with the children about birds. Yes, they had seen pigeons walking in the park, or flying between buildings; they had seen sparrows trailing after the pigeons or washing themselves in curbside puddles; they had heard an occasional crow or hawk or squawking gull. Some children had wondered where birds go when they die; some remembered sighting a nest in the branches of a tree in the park. We asked them if they could walk like a bird or imitate the way a bird moves its head when it walks. We asked what they thought feathers do, why birds have colors, how far a bird can see, how a bird flies. The children were quick to offer theories and speculations, and took delight in facts, in what they knew and wanted to know.

During this initial conversation, we introduced some new ideas. "Do you think there is a bird who could make the rain fall, or a bird who could bring the sun up into the sky?" We asked the children to imagine they had become one of those birds, a creator who could do things humans could not. One brave volunteer walked to the side of the room and told us that by moving her arms in a special way, like so, she could bring the night over the room. Another volunteered to make the stars disappear by swallowing them in her mouth. And another made thunder by racing around the room. The transition from what birds were in real life to what birds were symbolically and metaphorically was not difficult.

One day we brought an eagle's feather to class. As we showed the feather, we spoke of a bird, sometimes mysterious and shy, who lurks inside of us. Even as we sleep, this bird, we suspect, roams into our thoughts and sometimes becomes our thought, flying over great expanses of the earth.

We gave the children some paper and asked them to draw what they thought this bird of imagination looked like. Secure in the clarity of their vision, they nestled down into various corners of the classroom and drew without hesitation their special birds.

When they had finished their drawings, we encouraged each child to describe, either through dictation or writing, what his or her bird of imagination could do and how it came to be. For most of the children, even those who were usually apprehensive about telling stories, there was no shortage of revelations about this winged creature.

This bird makes everything come alive. She makes dead flowers become into alive flowers.

—Leola

This bird is so powerful that it can turn night into day. Its brain is like the brain of a very smart man. When he is going to turn night into day it covers the moon with his wings and then it makes a very loud sound to wake up the sun.

—Derrick

It was all the colors in the world. The birds grew and grew. Everytime the bird grows the sun shows more light. "

—Gregory

As you know my bird of the imagination is an ancient bird and so when it was born it was carved out of rock.

The bird of imagination has to get born because if it didn'get born, we wouldn't be able to get it out of our minds.

—Jarrod

The next step was to help the children make masks of their special birds. We hoped that as a participant in his or her own bird's life, each child could gain a modest sense of what human beings might have experienced on first encountering birds. As the children grappled with paper and paste, they heard how, from the earliest of times, birds were extraordinary presences in the lives of people who struggled daily with the elemental forces of nature. How among Native Americans, it was Raven of the Northwest Indians who "stole the sun from the chief of heaven and placed it in the sky," and that it was Dew Eagle, of the Iroquois, who "carried a bowl of water on his back and spread cooling dew over the hot earth." And how, according to the Chippewa, "the winds were made by great birds flapping their wings; and the clouds were the wings of the birds hiding the light in the sky."

Connecting children with these traditions was a way to strengthen our relation to the nature we are, and the "natures" we share and that are shared with us. The masks became the children's entryway into a world where the technology of our century had briefly been suspended, and the feel and touch of another species of animal was very much present. Perhaps the imagination is the mediating element between ourselves and all that surrounds us. As Joel, one of the children in this project, said:

My bird comes out at night on
a full moon. He flies through the sky.
At night you can never see him. He
is in you. His name is imagination.
He lives in a place called heart brain
body. It is in everyone. Some adults
think it is childish but it will never
leave you even if you hide it.

As the year came to a close in the spring, we wanted to create a ritual of sorts that would bring the children's imaginative abilities into play with their "birdfulness" and the outdoors, where sparrows, pigeons, bluejays, and gulls could accompany their activities.

One weekend in May, on a day of breezes and new blossoms, we gathered in Central Park—certainly one of the gifts of the city to birds and humans.

There musicians, storytellers, and dancers played, spoke, and danced for us about the birds that have flown through human consciousness. And now the wonder of flight became a possibility. With strips of cardboard and colored tissue papers, the children made wings and decorated them with bright colors. When their wings had been carefully fastened to their arms, our bird troop took to the road, in search of the four birds of our imagination—dream, play, transformation, and memory—hiding among the park's bushes and rocks.

Created by four artists, these birds magically came to life at the sound of the children's voices and their flapping wings, to the amazement and applause of the children and their guests. Other birds, high above us, watched from the treetops, as music of a Bolivian flute and drum now invited us to follow to the final event in the celebration. In one last gesture, we asked crane—another artist's creation, on wondrous stilts—to bring the imagination of the sky to the wings of our birds. We in turn asked our birds to send some of our imagination, through our cardboard wings, back into the sky and the universe to which we belong.

Tired but elated, the children began to leave the park with their parents and friends. We caught sight of a girl who had separated herself from the others, running hard as she could down the stone path, her cardboard wings with their paper tassels rustling in the wind behind her. In an instant she veered from the path and flew in and out of the bushes and trees, completely unaware of anyone, alive, in the way that animals are, to her own world. Who could distinguish, at that moment, what was bird and what was human? As she flew out of sight with her bird of imagination, she exemplified our human connectedness to all living things. In the words of one of the children: "My thought would be like a bird flying."

The sense of urgency Em Pariser (pp. xxvi-vii) and Bill Kaul (pp. 82, ff.) express so eloquently, each in his own way, needs to inform our best thinking and planning, and Richard Lewis' perspective is crucial to our understanding of the depth and breadth of the educational problem. So we'll be back to the dialogue in the spring issue.

John Taylor Gatto has graciously given us his permission to publish Chapter Fourteen, "Eyeless in Gaza," of his forthcoming book tentatively entitled The Empty Child. *I am forced by the sheer length of the manuscript to serialize the chapter in two parts—but when one considers that, historically, there is a very good precedent stemming from the nineteenth century and before of doing so—even so famous a writer as Charles Dickens, most of whose stories were first published in serial form in the popular magazines—I'm sure John won't be offended, being a history buff! I promise to attempt to summarize the thread of the argument from each previous segment!*

This new book is now in the hands of the editorial board at Simon and Schuster, and we hope and pray that they decide to leave it as untouched as possible from the way John sent it on to us! It is pure, unalloyed, fourteen-karat gold as it is! We'd better waft our prayers toward S&S that they keep their hands off this work! But in the meanwhile, "No, no, they can't take that away from ... us!"

EYELESS IN GAZA, Part I

by John Taylor Gatto

> *I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer [Eichmann] that made it impossible to trace the incontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds were monstrous, but the doer...was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous. There was no sign in him of firm ideological convictions or of specific evil motives, and the only notable charqcteristic one could detect in his past behavior as well as in his behavior during the trial...was something entirely negative; it was not stupidity but thoughtlessness ....Might not the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty for thought?*
>
> *—Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind*

1. Death and Devils, Men! It Is Moby Dick!

I think I always knew schoolbooks and real books were different, I think most kids do. But I remained ignorant of the grounds for distinction until one day I got tired of the simple-minded junior high school English curriculum of New York City and decided to teach *Moby Dick* to 8th grade classes in my third year in the business. It was unauthorized but a friendly assistant principal smuggled a school edition into the fall book purchases and we were able to weigh anchor the next fall.

What a book! As I remembered (correctly as it turned out) Ishmael of Melville's novel was a half-orphan by the decree of Fate but Ahab had consciously willed his own isolation from a young wife and child, a comfortable home, and the earth itself in order to pursue his real vocation, getting even with an insubordinate natural order. Indeed the three books which best define the essence of Americanness, as it stands out against all other records of being, all deal with ambiguous families, *Moby Dick*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Huck Finn*—and each was written close in time to the others. I don't think this is an accident. America has been an inferno for families, it was for mine, and by mid-century this quality found its voice.

Think of it. Pearl in Hawthorne's contribution to the great American fictional triad is a bastard, Hester, her mom, an adulteress, the Reverend a sexual predator and absentee father. And notice that Huck is *de facto* an adoptee, Jim a twice-uprooted African slave.

When we think about what our schools became we need to remember what a great pile of us are homeless, that's what the American secret is about. We itch for the homes we can never have, at least as long as we have schools *in loco*. Patricia Lines of the Department of Education in trying conscientiously to examine "what the rank and file of homeschoolers actually do" concluded that it would not be possible to research accurately because the families which presented themselves would be self-selected. But there were things possible to assert about the universe of these families even without statistical safeguards. They display "intense interest in the life of the community", there is a "pervasive communitarian lifestyle," and above almost anything else there is *loyalty* to the warp and woof of family:

> Homeschoolers are tremendously loyal as family members. They are suspicious of television and other less intimate influences. They eat as a family, they socialize as a family, they attend church as a family, they become members of an extended religious community [and] also members of an extended homeschooling community.

The great American trio of novels is about individuals broken from the family pattern, the closest they come to an orthodox home is the strange connection between Pearl and Hester in the dark forest—which the community elders hope to rupture.

America's best and most fascinating storytellers focus in on the haunting hollowness of much of American public life—we have no place to go when our work is done so our work in remaking the world is never done. There is no institutional solace for that malady and so, as if in defiance of our fate, we lay siege to the family sanctuary by *scientific* means as Ahab lay siege to the Ocean for his Whale.

I believe that the great tendencies of the New England mind, our most restless and insistent national temper, has been involved for all its career (though in many guises) in a deadly struggle to destroy the natural family and substitute in its place synthetic families of church, state, academy and corporation. It is no accident that stranger-adoption, a peculiarly *American* institution even today, was first legalized and institutionalized in Boston at the same moment *Moby Dick* appeared almost hand in hand with *Scarlet Letter*. Something in Ahab's insane flight from his own family and Ishmael's realization through Queequeeg's well-familied example that "love is all there is" coupled with Hawthorne's denouement where Pearl stands revealed as made whole by Hester's devotion, and sacrifice is meant by the authors as a statement of the thesis to which the synthetic family institutions are the antithesis.

For all this and other reasons long lost I decided to teach *Moby Dick* to all my 8th grade classes including the dumb ones. But I discovered right away that white whale was just too big for 45-minute bell breaks. I couldn't divide it comfortably enough to fit. Melville's book was too vast to say just what the "right way" to teach it really was, it spoke to every reader a different way; to grapple with it demanded elastic time, not the fixed bell breaks of my junior high; indeed it offered so many choices of purpose—some aesthetic, some historical, some social, some philosophical, some theological, some dramatic, some economic—that compelling the attention of a room full of young people to any one aspect of it seemed willful and arbitrary.

Soon after I began teaching *Moby Dick* I realized that the school edition wasn't a real book at all but a kind of disguised indoctrination. It provided all the questions, an addition to the original text intended to make the book teacher-proof and student-proof, if you read those questions let alone answered them there would be no chance ever again for a private exchange between you and Melville.

The editors of the school edition had provided a package of prefabricated questions and over a hundred chapter-by-chapter abstracts and interpretations of their own. If I didn't assign them the kids wanted to know why, and unless everyone duly parroted the party line set down by the book editor those used to getting high marks became scared and angry.

There was no avoiding the conclusion that the school text of *Moby Dick* had been subtly denatured and was worse than useless—it was dangerous. So I pitched it and bought a set of real *Moby Dicks* with my own money. The school edition asked all the right questions so I had to throw it away. Real books don't do that. Real books demand that people actively participate, ask their own questions. Books that show you the best questions to ask aren't just stupid, they hurt the mind under the pretext of helping it just exactly the way standardized tests do. Real books, unlike school books (but very like real homeschoolers), can't be standardized. They are so eccentric no one book fits everyone.

If you think about it, schooled people like school books are very much alike. Some interests find that desirable for accountant's reasons because the discipline which controls our economy and our politics derives from certain mathematical and interpretive exercises called market research—whose accuracy depends upon customers being very much alike and very predictable. People who read too many real books get quirky. If schooling were not so standardized that it produces more or less standardized human lives varying across only a narrow range there would be a catastrophe in this particular component of our commercial economy. Market research depends on people behaving as if they were alike, it doesn't really matter whether they are alike or not.

One way to see the difference between school books and real books like *Moby Dick* is to examine the different procedures which separate librarians who are the custodians of real books from schoolteachers who are the custodians of school books.

To begin with, libraries are usually comfortable, clean and quiet. They are orderly places where you can read instead of just pretending to read. People of all ages are found working there together, not just a pack of age-segregated kids. For some reason libraries are never age-segregated nor do they presume to segregate readers by questionable tests of ability any more than farms or forests or oceans do.

The librarian doesn't tell me what to read, doesn't tell me what sequence of reading I have to follow, doesn't grade my reading. The librarian trusts me to have a worthwhile purpose of my own. I appreciate that and trust the library in return because it trusts me.

Some other significant differences between libraries and schools are these: The librarian lets me ask my own questions and helps me when I want help, not when she decides I need it. If I feel like reading all day long, that's okay with the librarian who doesn't compel me to stop reading at intervals by ringing a bell in my ear. The library keeps its nose out of my home, too. It doesn't send letters to my mother reporting on my library behavior, it doesn't make recommendations or issue orders how I should use my time at home.

The library doesn't play favorites, it's a very democratic place as seems proper in a democracy. If the books I want are available I get them even if that democratic decision deprives someone even more gifted and talented than I am of the books. The library never humiliates me by posting ranked lists of good readers for all to see; it presumes that good reading is its own reward and doesn't need to be held up as an object lesson to bad readers. One of the strangest differences between library and school is that you almost never see a kid behaving badly in a library even though bad kids have the same access to libraries as good ones do.

The library never makes predictions about my future based on my past reading habits, nor does it imply dishonestly that things will be rosy if I read sanitary prose and thorns if I read Barbara Cartland. It tolerates eccentric reading habits because it realizes free men and women are often very eccentric.

Finally, the library has real books, not school books. I know the *Moby Dick* I find in the library won't have questions at the end of the chapters or be scientifically bowdlerized. Library books are not written by collective pens or selected by committees for passing elaborate inoffensive standards.

Real books conform only to the private curriculum of each author not to the invisible curriculum of a corporate bureaucracy. Real books transport us into an inner realm of private solitude and unmonitored mental reflection in a way schoolbooks cannot because that would jeopardize school routines devised to control crowds through close-order drill and endless surveillance and intimidation.

When you take the free will out of education students lose power to see where their own best interest lies. Other people have to be the eyes for them. Like Seeing Eye dogs that works fairly well if the dog is entirely devoted to its job but it never works as well as not going blind in the first place.

2. ACHTUNG! Ziss Section For Secret Eyes Only!

The people at the Defense Department knew something queer was happening much earlier than the rest of us. Why they said nothing is still a military secret. Let me show you what I mean:

During WWII eighteen million men showed up at registration offices to take low-level academic tests before being inducted. Although the years of maximum induction were 1942-1944, almost all the fighting force had been schooled in the 1930s, both the successful and those turned away. Eighteen million men were tested and seventeen million, two hundred and eighty thousand of them were judged to have the minimum competence in reading required to be a soldier. Although this was a two percent fall-off from the ninety-eight percent literacy among military applicants ten years before in 1930 the dip was so small it didn't worry anybody. A lot of things could have accounted for it and ninety-six percent literacy was so impressive by itself the small dip didn't register.

WWII was over in 1945. Six years later in 1950 another war began in Korea. Several million more men were tested for military service but this time 600,000 had to be rejected. In the few short years from the beginning of WWII to Korea a terrifying problem of adult illiteracy had appeared. The Korean War group received most of its schooling in the 1940s, it had more years in school, more hours, more professionally trained personnel, more scientific textbooks than the WWII men but it could not read, write, count, speak or think as well as the earlier, less schooled contingent.

The Vietnam-era young men had been schooled in the 1950s and the 1960s—much better schooled than either of the two earlier groups—but the four percent illiteracy of 1941 which had transmuted into the nineteen percent illiteracy of 1952 had now matured into the twenty-seven percent illiteracy of 1970. Now a disaster had happened because not only had the fraction of competent readers dropped to seventy-three percent but a substantial chunk of even those were only barely adequate to serve as cannon fodder. They could not read independently to learn, they could not keep abreast of developments by reading a newspaper, they could not read for pleasure, they could not sustain a thought or an argument, they could not write well enough to manage their own affairs without assistance.

Consider how much more compelling this steady progress of intellectual blindness is when we track it through Army admissions tests which have an absolute minimum of ability they must detect because lives are at stake than college admissions scores and standardized reading tests which can inflate apparent proficiency by changing the way the tests are scored, and do so at regular intervals.

Looking back into American history, abundant data exists from states like Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and

Massachusetts, to show that by 1840 the incidence of complex literacy in the United States was between ninety-three percent and one hundred percent wherever such a thing mattered. In the Connecticut census of 1840, for instance, only one citizen out of every 579 was illiterate, and you probably don't want to know, not really, what people in those days considered literate. Popular novels of the period give you a clue: *Last of the Mohicans*, written in 1818, sold so well a contemporary equivalent would have to move over ten million copies to match it, but if you pick up an uncut version (yes, it's still in print) you will find yourself in a dense thicket of philosophy, history, culture, manners, politics, geography, astute analysis of human motives and actions, and information-laden periodic sentences so formidable only a determined and well-educated reader can handle it nowadays.

And yet in 1818 we were a small-farm nation without colleges or academies to speak of. How could those simple folk have more complex minds than we do?

By 1940 the literacy figure for all states was at ninety-six percent for whites, eighty percent for blacks. Notice that for all the disadvantages the latter group labored under four of five were still literate. Six decades later at the end of the 20th century the National Adult Literacy Survey and the National Assessment of Educational Progress says forty-four percent of blacks can't read at all and *seventeen* percent of whites. To put it another way, black illiteracy has doubled, white illiteracy has quadrupled. Half our high school students can't read 6th grade lessons or write a three-sentence memo, two-thirds can't read ninth grade assignments, and three-quarters over the age of sixteen can't read high-school texts. Before you think of anything else in regard to these numbers, think of this: We are spending four times as much real money on schooling than we did sixty years ago, but sixty years ago virtually everyone, black or white, could do all those things.

What might be the cause of this? Well, according to a famous bestseller of a couple years back, *The Bell Curve*, two prominent social scientists named Murray and Hernnstein said we are seeing the results of selective breeding in a high-tech society, smart people just naturally get together with smart people and dumb people with dumb people, and as they have children generation after generation the differences between the groups gets larger and larger.

That sounds very interesting and the authors produce impressive mathematics to prove their case, but their documentation shows they were ignorant of the massive military data available to disprove their contention. The terrifying drop in literacy between

World War II and Korea happened in one decade—even the brashest "survival of the fittest" theorist wouldn't argue evolutionary effects happen that way. *The Bell Curve* writers say black illiteracy and violence is genetically programmed but like many academics they ignore unpleasant information which might contradict the evidence they present.

For example, on the matter of presumably hereditary violence we have to first sweep under the rug the inconvenient parallel of South Africa where thirty-one million blacks live, exactly the number who live in the United States. When we compare the numbers of blacks who died by violence in South Africa in civil war conditions during 1989, 1990, and 1991 we find that far from exceeding the violent death toll in the U.S., or even matching it, instead South Africans experienced less than one-quarter the violent deaths of American blacks. This is some peculiar sort of heredity.

Similarly when we look at scores on WWII classification tests we find that northern black men who were,better schooled than southern white men also scored higher on the tests. And if even more contemporary examples are sought we need only compare the current black literacy rate in the U.S. of fifty-six percent with the rate in the island nation of Jamaica where it is measured by the same instruments to be 98.5 percent, embarrassingly enough for racial theorists a figure considerable higher than the American white literacy rate of eighty-three percent, the figure currently quoted by the testing organizations mentioned earlier.

But if not heredity, what then could be the explanation? Well, one amazing change is indisputable, well documented, and very easy to track. Under cover of WWII American public schools massively converted to non-phonetic ways of teaching reading. On the matter of violence alone this seems to have had considerable impact; according to Justice Department studies[1] eighty percent of the incarcerated violent criminal population is illiterate or nearly so and there seems to be a direct connection between the humiliation of poor readers and the life of angry criminals. As reading ability plummeted in America after WWII the juvenile crime rate soared, so did the number of unwed mothers which doubled in the 1950s and doubled again in the sixties—when bizarre violence for the first time became commonplace in daily life.

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[1] A particularly clear example of the dynamics hypothesized can be found in Michael S. Brunner's monograph, "Reduced Recidivism and Increased Employment Opportunity Through Research-based Reading Instruction, Supported under Award #90-IJ-CX-0042, USDJ" (June, 1992).

But keep in mind that illiteracy came first. When the world is full of words and you make a fool of yourself constantly in trying to read them you get pretty angry it seems. Crime and various other forms of social disintegration follow. Perhaps if we had a completely illiterate mass society that might not be so, and sometimes it appears we are being driven in that direction, but as long as substantial rewards are reserved for those who master literacy one will follow the other as the night follows the day.

When literacy was abandoned as a primary goal by schools, white people were in a much better position than black people because they inherited a 300-year-old American tradition of learning to read at home by matching spoken sounds with letters, thus home in many instances was able to resist the deficiencies of dumbed-down schools, but black people had been forbidden to learn to read during the slavery years, and as late as 1930 were only averaging 3+ years of schooling. So they were helpless when teachers suddenly stopped teaching their children to read. They had no fall-back position. Notice, they were not helpless because they were genetically inferior but because they had to trust school authorities to a much greater extent than white people did.

Back in 1952 the Army did not believe what was happening and quietly began hiring hundreds of psychologists to find out how 600,000 high school graduates had successfully faked illiteracy. Regna Wood from the National Right to Read Foundation, to whom this research is owed, sums up the episode this way:

> After the psychologists told the officers that the graduates weren't faking, Defense Department administrators knew that something terrible had happened in grade school reading instruction. And they knew it had started in the thirties. Why they remained silent no one knows. The switch back to reading instruction that worked for everyone should have been made then. But it wasn't.

And if those disinherited millions, eternally alienated now from what power they once latently possessed to speak with Caesars or debate with Judges, afterwards felt a yearning, however vague and inchoate, for the strength they had been robbed of as children then like the seeker after Sampson, the champion, they might

> Ask for this great deliverer now and find him
> Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.
>
> —*Sampson Agonistes*

3. Pythagorean Number Magic

Do class size, teacher compensation incentives, and per-capita student revenue have much to do with educational quality? Then we must live in a golden age. From 1955-1991 the U.S. pupil/teacher ratio dropped forty percent, the average salary of teachers rose fifty percent in real terms, and the annual expense per pupil, inflation adjusted, soared three hundred and fifty percent. Welcome to paradise. It won't get any better than that in the days ahead. And perhaps it has been heavenly, but if so we need search out from whose perspective. What hypothesis might fit the facts that follow?:

Forget the ten percent drop in SAT and Achievement Test scores the press beats to death with regularity, how do you explain the thirty-seven percent decline since 1972 of the best students who score above 600 on the SAT? *This is an absolute decline, not a relative one,* it is not affected by who takes the test or how many. The absolute body count of smart students has shrunk drastically. And the test is not more difficult today but significantly less so.

And what of the fifty percent decline among the most rarefied group scoring above 750 which happened in two short decades plus two years?! Again, *these are not relative figures but absolute ones,* 2,817 American students reached this pinnacle in 1972, only 1,438 did in 1994 when many more kids took an easier test.

On the college end of the school ladder something queer was transpiring, too, as money poured into the training of children and the direction of this training was assigned to fewer and fewer hands (from 101,382 school districts in 1945 to 83,718 in 1950, to 40,520 in 1960 to 17,995 in 1970 to 15,709 in 1980 to 14,556 in 1992). And while the non-teaching bureaucracy in schools grew five hundred percent between 1960 and 1984 the quality of undergraduate education at America's fifty best-known colleges and universities altered radically. With some few relative exceptions these schools no longer provided "broad and rigorous exposure to major areas of knowledge" according to a 1996 report by the National Association of Scholars. In 1964 more than half these institutions required a thesis or comprehensive examination for a bachelor's degree but by 1993 only twelve percent did.

In the same time period the average number of classroom days declined from 191 to 156, and requirements in mathematics, natural science, philosophy, literature, composition, and history had almost vanished—rhetoric requirements, most potent of the active literacies completely vanished and the foreign language requirement fell from required at ninety-six percent of the great colleges to sixty-four percent, and dropping.

The NAS report was violently attacked by the vice president of the Association of American colleges and Universities as "twenty years out of date," the president of the American Association for Higher Education arguing the "real agenda" today was in a different place. Lee Shulman, professor of education and psychology at Stanford said it expressed "a deeply flawed concept of learning."

Just as no suburban householder can believe *their own* schools are bad, few looking at their own local bureaucrats could see Eichmann staring from behind the eyes, or that forty million young Americans with nine to twelve years of schooling could not make sense out of the printed page and as many as ninety million adult Americans could not read or write well enough to meet minimum competency standards, almost twenty percent of all high school graduates could not even read their diplomas.

Behind prison walls where the nation's jailed population has tripled since 1980 the National Center for Education Statistics said in a 1996 report that eighty percent of all prisoners could not interpret a bus schedule, could not understand a news article or warranty instructions, read maps, schedules or payroll forms, or balance a checkbook, and forty percent could not calculate the cost of a purchase.

In the face of abundant evidence that income goes up substantially for each level of literacy attained, and striking evidence that income differences between ethnic and racial groups tends to disappear when literacy is held constant, about fifty percent of adult Americans score in the two lowest levels of literacy. Low literacy is a chronic feature of the American landscape in spite of well-known statistical correlations between failure to read well and failure to be productive, law-abiding, and self-reliant.

4. Once Upon A Time...

Once upon a time there was a new nation that allowed its ordinary citizens to learn how to read well and encouraged them to read anything they thought would be useful. Close reading of tough-minded writing is the best and cheapest method ever discovered for developing an ability to think for yourself so this invitation to commoners was the most revolutionary pedagogy.

Reading, and discussion of that reading in a way that obliges you to formulate a position, give compelling reasons to support it, and defend it against objections is an operational definition of what we mean by the word "Education" in its most fundamental sense. No one will be able to do this very well without learning first all the ways of paying attention: from a knowledge of diction and syntax, figures of speech, etymology, etc. to a sharp ability to separate the primary from the subordinate, understand allusion, master a range of modes of presentation, test truth, and penetrate beyond the obvious to the profound messages of text. Reading and discussion is the way we develop reliable judgment, the way we come to penetrate the covert movements behind the facade of public appearances.

Just as experience is necessary to understand abstraction so the reverse is true. Experience can only be mastered by extracting general principles out of the mass of details; in the absence of a perfect universal mentor, books and other texts are the best and cheapest stand-ins, always available to those who know where to look. Watching the details of an assembly line or a local election unfold is not very educational unless you have been led in ways to analyze the experience. Reading is the skeleton key. Nothing it teaches is more important than the state of mind it requires, one in which you are absolutely alone with the thoughts of another mind and compare them to your own, a matchless form of intimate rapport but one only available to those with the ability to block out every possible distraction and concentrate, hence the urgency of reading well if you are to read for power at all.

Once you trust yourself mind-to-mind with the greatest intellects, artists, scientists, warriors and philosophers of the centuries you come to realize that you are free, as Edmund Stone was in 1833 you'll remember. In the America of before we had forced schooling an astonishing range of unlikely people knew that reading was like the eyesight of Sampson, something that made them formidable, that taught them their rights and how to defend those rights, that helped them be self-determining and not intimidated by ~~experts~~, that gave them insight into the ways of the human heart so they could not be cheated or fooled so easily, and that provided an inexhaustible store of useful knowledge, advice on how to do just about anything.

Standing on the threshold of the twenty-first century in a nation wallowing in illiteracy and pseudo-literacy, where reading instruction is the virtual monopoly prerogative of licensed agents of the state, it becomes genuinely difficult to imagine things were ever any other way, so if we are ever to come to grips with the plague of blindness which has been inflicted upon us for whatever reasons we need the past for comparison and contrast.

In the beginning of America was the word. "Nothing so baffles the scientific approach to human nature as the vital role words play in human affairs," wrote Hoffer, and never in history did words have such a part to play in the lives of commonfolk as in this new world.

Six hundred thousand copies of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* were sold in the early Revolutionary period at a time when there were barely that number of free individuals around, by 1812 DuPont was claiming barely four in a thousand could not read well and that very young children had a disciplined skill in argumentation thanks to daily debates at the common breakfast table. If evidence of that contention was needed, it could be found in the sale of five million copies of Cooper's complex and allusive novels by 1820 and an equal sale of Noah Webster's didactic Speller—both to a population of dirt farmers under twenty million in size.

In 1835 Richard Cobden announced there was six times as much newspaper reading in the United States as in England and the census figures of 1840 gave fairly exact evidence that a sensational reading revolution had taken place without any exhortation on part of public moralists and social workers but because common people had the initiative and freedom to learn. In the state of Connecticut only one person in every 574 was illiterate; in North Carolina, the worst situation of any state surveyed, eight out of nine could still read and write.

In 1853 Per Siljestrom, a Swedish visitor, wrote, "in no country in the world is the taste for reading so diffused among the common people as in America," the *American Almanac* observed grandly, "Periodical publications, especially newspapers, disseminate knowledge throughout all classes of society and exert an amazing influence in forming and giving effect to public opinion." It noted the existence of over 1,000 newspapers. We were a nation of readers and would-be readers, all of us rich or poor, nobody had ever seen anything like us.

In this nation of common readers the spiritual longings of ordinary people, to borrow a phrase from Robert Inchausti, shaped the public discourse. Ordinary people who could read, though not privileged by wealth, power, or position, could see through the fraud of social class and the even grander fraud of official expertise, they knew where these things came from and what to do about them because they could read well or someone in their circle of acquaintance could.

5. How Hard Is It To Learn to Read?

Sam Blumenfeld, whose book *The New Illiterates* is probably the best introduction to what went wrong with reading in the U.S. after it fell into the hands of ideologues and commercial interests, got a letter from a reader of a little volume he wrote to help people teach their own children to read which he showed to me. The writer was bursting with pride at the success she was having and the simplicity of imparting the alphabet code to her four children—ranging in age *up to five*. The author's method was the classic time-tested one of practice with the letter sounds (which are far more regular than the reading establishment would have you believe), a practice government schools tried to veer away from the very beginning when Horace Mann prevaricated about witnessing firsthand Prussian success with a different system but only succeeded in doing so big-time during WWII and afterwards.

As the lady was discoursing about her somewhat random fifteen-minute teaching sessions which got the job done painlessly with the five-year-old she abruptly confided that the three-year-old was working his way through the lessons alone:

> One day I found my three-year-old at the kitchen table reading S-am, Sam; m-an, man, and so on, completing Lesson 2 all by himself. I had not taught him. I had just taught him his letter sounds. He picked it up and did it himself. That's how simple it is.

* * * * *

... To be continued in our next ...

> To [Francisco] Ferrer, however, state education was as noxious as that of the church. For state and church alike sought to keep out new ideas that might undermine the status quo. "Rulers have always taken care to control the education of the people," he declared. "They know better than anyone else that their power is based almost entirely on the school, and they therefore insist on retaining their monopoly on it."
>
> —Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*

Jerry Mintz, founder and director of Burlington, VT's Shaker Mountain School for a couple of decades, was the national secretary of the NCACS for several years, during which time the number of member schools grew ten-fold. He published a comprehensive directory of alternative schools a few years ago, and also networks (via AERO and extensive world-wide travel) with alternative schools and school people all over the globe. His AERO home page on the Web is hosted for him by Puget Sound Community School, thanks to Andy Smallman. The school's own home page is http://www.speakeasy.org/~pscs/home.html. Jerry's AERO page is at http://www.speakeasy.org/~aero/home.html.

NOTES ON MY TRIP TO WAABNO GAMAAK— Helping to change a school from an authoritarian to democratic process

by Jerry Mintz

I got a call from Jayne Walker, who was representing the Waabno Gamaak School of the Grand Traverse Band of Indians in northern Michigan. They had started a new alternative school, paid for by the tribe. They did it on six-week notice and were hoping it might eventually become a charter school. Through an open enrollment policy, they had taken in 104 students, kindergarten through grade 12. They had only been planning for 60 children. Many of these kids came from very serious problem family backgrounds. They had a short time to hire teachers. The administrators, Jayne Walker and Pam Martell, a native Chippewa Indian, wanted to help the school become a real free, democratic one and this was to some extent the vision of the people who created the school and hired Pam. She is the actual director and I talked to her at length on the phone also. She and Jayne understood what an alternative school should be, but they were having a disastrous time trying to make it work in this kind of situation.

Among other things, the teachers had only basically traditional training, and did not understand much about alternative or democratic education. The kids were certainly not making it any easier. They were pretty close to being out of control. There were constant fights and problems among them. One member of the staff had resigned and then decided to come back the next week. They sometimes had police come into the school.

They originally called me looking for more staff, but when they found out what I might be able to do they decided they wanted me to come out as a consultant to help them establish a democratic approach, a more holistic one. They scheduled me to come almost immediately. Our feeling was that it was probably crucial that I do so. In fact, while I was there the board met and was talking about closing the school down temporarily because they were afraid that it might be dangerous for some of the younger kids there.

I got there four days later, on a Monday evening and went out to eat with Pam and Jayne at a restaurant in Traverse. They gave me background on the situation they were facing. It was daunting, to say the least. It's one that if I just thought about it theoretically, I'd say it was almost doomed to failure, to take so many new problem kids into a situation like that. Money from a casino was funding this school at this point through the tribal trust fund. The physical location of the school was within about 1/4 mile of the casino in a facility that was previously a health clinic. It consists essentially of two large rooms with a small room between, and with a large open hallway between them all. A few hundred feet away is a youth center building which is being used as a cafeteria for the kids' lunch program and for some recreational activities.

As I walked down toward the youth center building a bunch of the kid had gotten off the bus and one 12 year old Indian kid by the name of Victor had a little kid down on the ground and was pushing him around. I said, "What's going on?" He said, "This is Indian torture." And I just sort of picked him up and put my hand down to the kid who was on the ground and picked him up. Both of them looked a little startled because, of course, they had never seen me before.

I planned to get students, staff and administrators to talk about how they saw the school as it was, and what their ideal school would look like. I did that for a few hours on the first day. I taped kids coming on the bus, kids playing on the swings and little merry go round, kids in class, interviews of teachers and students about the school. During the day I saw various activities. I saw the staff basically running an authoritarian program with kids continuously being sent over to Pam, the Administrator. Two days earlier the school board had just come up with a new system of consequences that were fairly punitive and designed as an emergency measure. This included a several-step program which would lead to kids being sent home, then kicked out for a couple of days, and finally expelled for various infractions, such as fighting, smoking, etc. It is important to understand that when I first came there the school had only been operating for three weeks. At one point I saw a big confrontation between one student, Matt, and one of the high school teachers.

They obviously had a great deal of antipathy toward each other. Matt was a rather large 16-year old kid.

I taught a little ping pong at lunch time. I like to use table tennis as a way of helping people come to realize that they are good learners. One kid named William was pretty good and became quite a bit better before we were done. I taught him how to hit a slam and he really loved it. I taught a bunch of other kids and started wherever they were. Many of them had no idea of how to serve the ball. One, Anthony, had set a record by the time we were done for the number of times hitting the ball back and forth, which is one of the things that I do with kids who are beginners.

At 12:30 we pulled everyone together and tried to have a meeting. First, we showed the video and there was a fair amount of attention for that 1/2 hour or so. When we stopped the video at one point, they said they wanted to see the rest of it. At the end of the video, it showed one of the teachers, talking to his class as one of the students right next to him (Anthony) had a great big yawn. We showed two kids from his class when he was teaching about erosion come in and do a class with the third to fifth graders. That was nice to see. But that teacher is definitely very rules oriented and has a very authoritarian approach. Although he seemed to show over the several days we went through this process that he is interested in learning about other approaches, he reverted to an authoritarian approach after I left.

After the video we tried to have a meeting but the older kids immediately left the room. I tried to get them back in but it was difficult. I was not so much upset as amazed at the inability of the kids to focus on the meeting or to listen when any adult spoke. It was as if, when they heard an adult speak, they couldn't hear it.

We tried to talk a little bit about what the school was like and whether the video was an accurate view of it. One kid said, "No, it doesn't show kids fighting." When I got everyone back in I said that we would divide up into four groups: younger kids, the junior high group, the high schoolers, and the teachers. I asked for student discussion leaders for each group. It was a new paradigm. The staff were a little stunned at this and one of the teachers said, "They'll see that they need us." Some kids overheard her and were offended by that, the administrator later told me.

Victor videotaped the meeting at the end of the day. Throughout the time I was there, kids shot a total of two or three hours of videos, some of which we played back there. It was close to the end of the day but the kids who volunteered to organize these groups were ready to write down things that kids liked and didn't like about the school. We told them we would do it the next day because the buses were about to arrive. The volunteers were Mary, a 13-year-old student who volunteered to do the middle school group; Danny in 5th grade said she would work with the little kids; Matt would do one of the older groups and his sister the other.

At 5:00 there was a staff meeting at the casino where we had a meal together. We talked a little about what had gone on earlier in the day. At this point the staff were really belligerent. They felt their school had been disrupted and they didn't really understand what was going on. I did the best I could to explain what was happening. After that there was a board meeting which later turned into a parents' meeting. At the board meeting the staff talked to Pam and Jayne about closing down the school, at least temporarily because the staff had complained that they needed a break. They were getting worn out by the situation. The staff made a list of things that kids were to be sent home for and they talked about that.

Pam made a really passionate speech about what she saw as the vision as explained to her by the board when they hired her. She believed in that vision: of an environmentally oriented school that empowered kids and fulfilled its name which means "Leaders of the Future." Pam said she was almost at the point where she could retire from the State Department of Education. She'd almost finished her Doctoral thesis. At first she had to work two jobs at the same time. She put out all the energy she could but was exhausted by their lack of support at this point. She hoped they would have faith in her and in the kids for their vision to succeed. After this very well-phrased speech she left and did not return to the meeting. Afterward, she said she didn't really remember all that she had said because she said she just put it in the hands of the Creator and just let it go. And it was very powerful. I think the fact that she didn't come back was also powerful, although some on the board said they wished they had her there to give her their support. I have a feeling that if she actually had been there, that might not have happened.

During the meeting, a secretary who worked in the office broke down and cried, saying, "Don't give up on these kids. I was one of them. When I see these kids, I see myself." When I was given the floor I suggested that the board consider having students added to the school board. I suggested three but amazingly they said, "That would be an uneven number. How about four?" So it was decided that four students could be elected as voting members of the school board. To me this indicated that the board did have a vision of its students as "future leaders," although they weren't clear how to make that happen.

After that I met with individual groups of kids to do "question classes," starting with the junior high school group, then the high school, and then the elementary school. I let the kids brain storm any questions that they wanted to know the answers to, no holds barred, nothing censored. I made it clear that I meant it, that they could ask any question which interested them. In all the times I've done question classes and I must have done hundreds of them, this is the first group that completely took me up on that. They trusted me and were testing me at the same time, asking sometimes shocking questions. In the middle school group, I would say that about half of the questions they asked had to do with sex. At first it was kind of hard to get a reaction from them at all but when they started going we got a total of about 32 questions in just a few minutes time. I don't think they'd ever seen anything like it before. After we listed the questions, kids were allowed to indicate which of these questions they personally would be interested in discussing.

The high school students' questions seemed to center more on drugs and they were also phrased in a different way, focusing on asking questions to me specifically rather than general questions.

Somehow in the discussion to clarify one of the questions, it jumped right into the home life of some of these kids and their backgrounds. They talked about how difficult their lives had been. One of the kids said, "Well, you're Indian, aren't you?" Then they began to compare their family situations. One boy who was about 9 years old said that his brother was in jail. One boy said that he had smoked crack. One boy said that his mother was in jail and that he was in a foster home and that he liked his real mother better. Another boy, Elijah, said that his mother had died this year of alcoholism, that he smokes cigarettes, had taken acid, had been arrested three times.

I then told them the story of one of the students who had been in my school, Jimmy, whose mother had died when he was 6 years old. He had been thrown out of his own house when he was 12. His father said he couldn't handle him any more and was going to put him in the state's custody but instead his grandmother tried to put him in a school in Vermont. He left that school and wound up going to our school. I told them that this kid now had a Master's degree from a university in England and was going to get a Doctorate and was now a stock broker and a banker in New York. Elijah could have reacted cynically but he didn't. He looked at me and just said, "Wow!" He was just amazed that such a thing was possible. I think that he realized at the same time that I thought the same kind of thing was possible for him. From then on Elijah kept on coming up to me in various contexts, perhaps just to confirm the fact that I really did see that kind of potential in him.

In the afternoon we pulled people together again and divided them up to talk about what they thought the idea school would look like. After a brief discussion I announced that we would be having a kind of demonstration of how the democratic process would work and needed volunteers from every group. I introduced the idea of the meeting and we made an agenda as an example of the kinds of decisions we could make.

The only staff person involved at the demonstration meeting was Pam and she was really impressed with the process. We then went through what the rules should be regarding off-campus lunch breaks. They put a lot of intelligence to the question, deciding that kids over a certain age could sign up in advance to be able to go off campus. They would indicate exactly where they were going, with whom, what their transportation was, and when they would be back. For younger kids, they wanted specific permission from parents, including who was going to pick them up and who was going to bring them back.

There is no doubt that the students who participated in that process were impressed by it, and realized that they did have the ability to be self-governing. It was a watershed event, and in stark contrast to the previous attempts to discuss the school in a group.

The group decided we would have an official school meeting starting the first thing the next day. We decided we would attempt to have that first meeting in the school itself and try to keep as many kids involved in it as possible. Most all of them did participate. About half the kids stuck around to experience some of the meeting. Some left to go into the other room. Initially we agreed to explore the idea of having democratic meetings to make decisions but it was proposed that the decisions were to go to the board for ratification. It was also agreed that the decisions the board had just made would be the basis for the rules for the school and that any changes would be ratified by the board. It was hoped that ultimately the board would turn over decision making to the meeting itself.

Proposals that passed:

1. Get the school board's approval for the changes requested.
2. Invite two school board members to attend the meetings.
3. Adopt the "stop" rule: Anyone has the right to say "stop" to an activity that really bothers them. The other person is obliged to

stop. All rules and procedures remain in place. Abuse of the stop rule will be reported to a teacher, administrator, or student.

When we broke after our discussion of the stop rule, there was some division about just what the stop rule said and how it was to be worded. One teacher, and Matt, the student, had a pretty clear concept about what had been passed and decided to get together to come up with a proper wording of the stop rule. This happened in such a natural way that it really only occurred to me later how significant it was. These were the two who just a day earlier were taking pot shots at each other and were completely at loggerheads. Now, they were working together on the wording of this rule which they did successfully complete. Later on, the teacher said to me that he doubted very much that anything like this could have happened were it not for this process.

4. Begin a judicial committee of five members composed of three students and two alternate students, two teachers or staff members and two alternate teachers or staff members. They will all be elected by the students, teachers, and staff. Candidates with the most votes will fill the positions for which they ran. The next highest candidates will fill the alternate positions. Committee members will have the freedom to resign and they can be impeached by a majority. The judicial committee may be appealed to concerning the appropriateness of consequences regarding guilt or innocence. The judicial committee does not change any rule or policies made by the school board or by the school meeting. It was agreed that each term would be for one school term, that is, until January, when there would be a second election for the rest of the school year.

5. Approach the school board and request that our judicial committee be allowed to handle the matter of appeals. People will still be able to appeal judicial committee decisions to the school board.

6. The meetings, decisions, election procedure and candidates will be explained to students on Friday, November 8.

The participation in the meeting was dynamic and powerful. The two of the younger kids who stuck through the whole process were Elijah, 10, and Nick, 12. Elijah is a kid who clearly hadn't experienced anything like this before but obviously had the capacity to do so. It was quite an effort for him to do this. At certain points he would excuse himself from the meeting and go out and just take a break and then come back in. He really was pushing himself to his absolute limit. At one point, I was kicked out of the meeting for five minutes for talking out of turn after I'd been warned, which I thought was just wonderful. Then, not long after that, they took a break, but I was informed by Matt that I couldn't come right back in after the break because I still had three minutes of my five minutes to go before I could come back in!

At the end of the day, Nick said to me, "Just think, only yesterday we were beginning to talk about the stop rule and today we're running for election! Incredible!"

On the fourth day, when I first came in that morning Paul, 9, was standing in front of the administration building. He has always been the butt of a lot of fighting and problems at the school. He said to me, "I was fighting with Elijah and I said 'stop' and it worked!"

The question of whether or not new names could be added to the list of candidates was discussed and it was decided that if they were at the meeting at that time, but had not been there the day before, they could add their names to the list. Two names were added to both lists. The whole day seemed to be much calmer. There was a discussion on what day of the week there should be meetings. To my surprise, they decided that they needed to have two meetings a week and that they would be on Mondays and Fridays.

I hesitate at writing this account because the situation at Waabno Gamaak is still very much in flux. I've been on the phone almost daily with people at the school since I returned to New York.

The process does seem to be taking root. For example, the elections were held as planned the week after I left. Three students and two staff members were elected to the judicial committee and four students were elected to the school board.

One day I received a fax from one of the students! She wrote that they had received their first snow, and that the teachers had arbitrarily decided that there could be no snowball throwing at the school. She felt this was a violation of the new process.

When the next school board meeting, the four new student members showed up, ALONG WITH 20 OTHER STUDENTS! Many parents attended the meeting also, to see why their children were suddenly so interested. At the meeting several important items were discussed, including the snowball problem. The students had worked hard to find a way to have safe snowball fights. The parents and board members were very impressed with the quality of the students' participation.

Since that time there has been a continual ebb and flow. More faxes have been exchanged.

In a letter to them after I returned to New York I said, I'm back in New York now, but a part of me remains with you. I want to thank all of the staff and students who worked so hard for those few days last week to help begin the creation of a system of governance which will empower you all. You may not realize that if you are successful in this task, you will all truly be leaders, not only of the future, but of the present. Your school will be significant not only to other Native American groups, but to people in education everywhere, much in the same way that it was Native American governance systems that led the way for the systems of the United States and the United Nations. Of course, this will not be easy. But you already know that. And you have shown last week that you are not afraid of that hard work.

See Jerry's own home page for AERO, his newsletter, on the Internet at http://www.speakeasy.org/~aero/home.html—which is hosted by Andy Smallman's Puget Sound Community School, whose own home page is http://www.speakeasy.org/~pscs/home.html

Arthur Gladstone, a retired social scientist, has a deep and abiding interest in schools and schooling. In the following article he tells us one of the reasons why. Arthur had another article, "Disconnectedness and Its Discontents," in the Spring issue of the Journal of Family Life.

I WENT TO SEVEN DIFFERENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by Arthur Gladstone

I grew up in New York City in the 30's. We moved to a new neighborhood nearly every year, sometimes in the Bronx, sometimes in Manhattan. We moved because our family finances went down during the Depression and then up again and because of changes in my parents' jobs. So I went to seven different elementary schools.

My mother was a schoolteacher who changed her attitudes about schooling from time to time. Part of the time she wanted me to be stimulated and liberated, so I went to three private "progressive" schools. And part of the time she didn't want me to become an élitist snob, so I went to four public schools.

I don't remember thinking at the time that there was anything strange about all these moves—lots of people were moving around at that time for similar reasons. Changing schools was sometimes confusing and frustrating, but I accepted it as the way things were. I do remember being upset about leaving the school which had been my favorite, the Little Red School House. This school had been founded in the 20's by Elizabeth Irwin in a red brick building in Greenwich Village. Like other progressive and alternate schools it emphasized (and still emphasizes) the education of the whole child, artistic, emotional, and practical, as well as factual and intellectual. It was, of course, much influenced by John Dewey. Learning by doing is a basic principle. Creativity, curiosity and independent thinking are encouraged. Agnes De Lima wrote a book about it (*The Little Red School House*, Macmillan, 1942).

The Little Red School House became my personal educational Utopia, the rich and joyful experience to which I compared all my later schools. Fortunately, it was also the school at which I stayed the longest, two and a half years.

As you might expect, my smorgasbord schooling had some powerful effects on me, some obvious at the time and some which I realized only much later. One obvious effect was that I usually didn't make friends. My attitudes and interests were often too different—and I usually wasn't around long enough anyhow. The Little Red School House was an exception—I did make friends there. Partly as a result of not making friends, I became a bookworm. Books became my treasured companions. I remember especially the series of Dr. Doolittle books, which I loved. Maybe I identified with Tommy Stubbins, the doctor's young assistant who went adventuring with him, apparently instead of going to school.

Another result of all this was that I developed a strong interest in ways of teaching and learning. I saw that there are many possibilities and maybe no one right way, though I certainly had my preferences. This probably contributed to my interest in becoming a teacher and to my interest in experimenting with different approaches when I did teach.

A crucial result was that I became very much an outsider, emotionally and intellectually homeless. There was no place where I had deep roots, no group I strongly identified with, no approach to life that I totally accepted. This made me lonely and sometimes confused but it also gave me great inner freedom. I was much less in awe of teachers, and grown-ups generally, than most of my peers. I felt very free in my own thoughts—but I learned to keep most of my thoughts to myself, especially my unconventional and critical thoughts. Along with keeping my mouth shut I learned the survival skill of adaptability— discovering that was acceptable in each situation and wearing the appropriate conforming mask.

I'm glad I was able to maintain my own attitudes despite what teachers said. Talking with another man recently we discovered that we had both been labeled "listeners" by music teachers in New York City public schools, judged unable to carry a tune and therefore not supposed to sing along with everyone else. He took this seriously and has refrained from singing ever since, but I liked to sing and wasn't overwhelmed by the teacher's opinion, so I kept on singing and enjoying it (outside of class, of course).

I very much appreciate the positive aspects of my outsider outlook. In addition to helping me adapt to a great variety of situations and groups, it helped me to be constructively critical and innovative in many situations, to become passionately involved in criticizing and working for change. However, I hope that independent judgment and creative discontent can be developed without the loneliness and rootlessness I felt. Two possibilities occur to me—one is the obvious point that it would help a great deal if teachers are much less authoritarian than my public school teachers were; the other possibility is to provide lots of exposure to other points of view and ways of life. Once when I was teaching social psychology, I took a group of college students to spend a weekend in a religious community with a very different lifestyle. They enjoyed the experience as a tremendous stimulant to thought and discussion. Some of them still remembered it vividly years later. Exposure to very different attitudes and practices could be given at much earlier ages, giving the benefits of my school-hopping, without the alienation.

And Arthur sent us the following self-explanatory journal written by a Divinity School acquaintance:

HANGING ON AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD:
Teaching Writing to Urban Special Needs Youth:
a Journal kept by Barbara Geis, Harvard Divinity School

17 April 1996

Somewhere at the edge of the world we write. We sit in a classroom. We experience all kinds of emotion. We become loud and angry. We think about our pain. We think about our friends and our school. In as many ways as we can think of, we resist. Mostly we just come back day after day, but we have found that when we do this we are a great testament to the resilience of the human spirit. We write ourselves into existence.

I write this about the experience of designing and teaching writing courses at an urban special needs high school in Massachusetts. This experience has taught me much about sadness, survival, hope, healing and writing. My endeavor has been to incorporate as much personal writing as possible into my curriculum, to encourage student writing that breaks convention and is written from the heart. So it is in the fashion of the personal journal that I will structure this study of teaching writing to at-risk youth.

8 February

For public secondary certification I have sought out placement at an urban special needs high school. For this placement I must design and teach two of my own classes. My classes are personal writing and American myth. Classes at this school are small, averaging about 10 students. Coursework is creative, entirely generated by teachers. There is no mandated curriculum. It is almost as if anything goes with this group of students that society has neglected. Whatever works. And because of this the students do some innovative real world tasks.

My students are from a variety of backgrounds. All have something that has kept them from succeeding at the regular high school. This ranges from drug and alcohol problems, juvenile delinquency and teen pregnancy to learning disabilities of all kinds, as well as emotional problems. Something in each life story

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has not allowed him or her to continue in regular school. Here they have another chance. The program is small, only about seventy students. Each teacher is also a counselor. Students meet in counseling groups once a day and participate in the running of the school through committee work. Staff works together as a team and because there is so much crisis, they are much like an emergency room team. One of my co-advisors in graduate school calls this kind of teaching triage.

This school was not on the list of those we were sent to evaluate as possible placements but I sought it out because I wanted a place that engaged the spiritual and psychological elements of teaching. I wanted to raise these to the level of discourse. Previously I had taught college composition and Catholic high school honors English. I have always been drawn to the most difficult students, those hardest to reach. I scheduled my college courses late afternoon/evening so that I could have the more interesting older students, those who were being educated on their own terms. Their inner lives were rich and they demanded work that made a difference in some way. This meant I could incorporate the passions of my educational background: social justice having to do with race, class, gender and sexual orientation. My training in feminism and multicultural literacy seemed to have some meaning here.

11 February

Mary O'Brien told me about a DC inner-city school designed around an Italian system which emphasizes art and conversation. The students produce beautiful creations. I think ahead to my own plans for curriculum—storytelling, conversation, the journal, learning to articulate, gaining awareness. Yes, emphasizing language skills through the journal and through conversation. Giving my students conversation and language or allowing them to discover their own capacity gives them power.

As Carolyn Heilbrun has said, "The true representation of power is not of a big man beating a smaller man or woman. Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter." (18) The power of language. All the voice research en vogue in education circles may be embodied and enacted in this way. All the research on rhetoric and its power in the healing process fits.

I think about my own writing, striving for precision and passion. I think about what I will teach: access to language, art as a way of gaining access to communication, aesthetics or the beauty of culture. Whose definition? I teach about possibility and the creation of transformative space, of gaining this power of language and of gaining power in other realms, to put on the armor that will sustain one in the battles initiated because of one's race, class, gender or sexual orientation. Maybe I must create a rhetoric of grace.

VISITING CLASSES:

14 February

Incredible two days visiting. It is as if I have returned home or to a place where I belong, a place where I have important work to do.

One of the best experiences was working with Jeff, a student, on his outline. I gave him the questions I use to focus my own research papers and he worked hard showing his depth of knowledge about basketball. To form a thesis: What is the most important thing I have to say about this topic? To form subtopics for the body of the paper. What are the three or four most important things I have to say about this thesis? Outside snow covered the rooftops of Somerville. After he had worked a long time, he asked to take a break. He sat on the windowsill and asked me about college. He told me of his plans for college and the future. I told him I would help him with applications. He told me of the problems he had attending his previous high school, "too much racial tension." I asked him what he liked to write about and he responded "the truth," saying if he had something important to write about he would. I felt privileged that he trusted me enough to talk to him about these thoughts and feelings.

TEACHING IN DON ORTEGO'S VILLA

Later, 14 February

One other thing strikes me, the fluidity and importance of identity. Many students here introduce themselves to visitors and new students by names other than their own. One student spent much time in class talking about her son: time spent with him, and her physical way of disciplining him. After class, the teacher told me this student tells everyone about her child but she doesn't have one. I would come to discover that many of the young women have imaginary pregnancies as well as real pregnancies and real children. All a part of this reality. It reminds me of modern drama: Shepard's play *The Buried Child*?

In some ways it's like the movie I recently watched, *Don Juan de Marco*. Don Juan knew that he was really a patient in an ordinary mental hospital but he preferred to think of the hospital as Don Ortego's villa and through this act of imagination, he transformed his reality. Meanwhile, my mentor teacher tells my co-advisor: these are kids that adults have repeatedly failed.

MY OWN PATH:

17 February

As I graduate I ask: Who am I? What do I offer? Where is home? What is my community? Part of my being at Harvard, when I let it be, is about transgressing boundaries. The students here, where I am teaching, make me want to do my best work. Like in my personal relationship, this setting asks me to bring my best and most productive self—something about desire and trust . . . possibly hope. Education here is student centered in the most profound way. There is no other way to survive and succeed.

23 February

I have been reading Thomas Moore's *Soulmates.* I have been skipping around from topic to topic."Technologies of Intimacy" are the ways we go about creating and sustaining closeness in our relationships, expressing and evoking the "withinness" in community and friendship. It isn't enough to be concerned with intimacy in an abstract way, or to see it only as a feeling that comes and goes without our participating in its design. Intimacy, like everything else, requires art. (115)

Specifically about conversation he writes:

> True conversation is an interpenetration of worlds, a genuine intercourse of souls, which doesn't have to be self-consciously profound but does have to touch matters of concern to the soul. . . Some people play a game of "I've bared my heart, now you bare yours." But soulfulness is not created by naive exposure. What matters is not how much you expose about yourself in conversation, but that your soul is engaged. (118)
>
> ... I would reverse the notion that conversation is important because it is therapeutic, and say instead that therapy is helpful because it is conversational. To the soul, the important thing is to talk, not healing. It is much more significant to the soul to talk than it is to find some technique for repairing life. Conversation might be an Emersonian mode of psychoanalysis, lifting experience into the somewhat higher regions of imagination and making us feel more alive. (119)

I have discussed with others the lack of vitality of many of our graduate courses, the lifeless quality of much academic writing. As

I endeavor to spend time with those who most definitely have the soul complaints I think of Moore's words:

> Some soul complaints clearly indicate the kind of lack that conversation could fill. Loneliness, busy-ness, a craving for love, hyperactivity—all these suggest the need for something that would feed intimacy and ground the soul. (123)

A CONVERSATION ABOUT MYTH:

29 February

Lunch with Heike and friend. She briefly outlined her course. Central to the course was an understanding of the dual structure of myth. Two sides to the story. Understanding the danger of myth is as important as understanding the power of story for good.

For example in *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison reveals how in most popular novels and movies beauty and romance is defined against the Black person. The main character of Morrison's novel tries to maim herself so that she will have the blue eyes that are so cherished in the American myth. This is the danger of an elitist aesthetic.

Myths are self-defining and self-perpetuating. Emerson's represent the myth of self-reliance and the rejection of other thoughts. The *Scarlet Letter* presents us with a heroine and the exploration of the myth of compromise. *The Great Gatsby* represents the death of a dream. Gatsby is really a gangster but through Nick's eyes he is portrayed as heroic. This is the myth of the rich/heroic figure combined with a negative characterization of the poor. It is the myth of the glamour of money. All this I want to translate for my own American myth course. This topic is incredibly rich and flexible.

4 March

Continued visits to my school. Working with specific students to help them finish research projects. Much resistance from the students as they face the task of writing. They grapple with much and writing brings everything up for them as it does for all of us, our inadequacies, our abilities or inabilities to manage time and to express ourselves. In this setting all of this is magnified. Resistance could be a future theme in my research because I now am shocked by its prevalence. Students have a language all their own about this. When they say "this sucks" or "this is stupid, I hate it," it often means this is too hard and I feel stupid so I am going to give up. I have to incorporate as many approaches to the many kinds of learning styles as I can.

18 March

[Barbara goes home to Arizona to help celebrate her parents' fiftieth anniversary.] "Writing and Being" is a course offered at my undergraduate university, Arizona State, by a man named Lynn Nelson. His course and work with Native American students involves telling one's own personal story in the form of a journal entry and then making it public through publication and community readings. He has organized Native American writing groups that tour with powerful circle readings. Even though I never officially took this course it has influenced all of my graduate work and teaching. This is because I went to a journal writing workshop given by Lynn and that workshop, along with *Journal to the Self* by Kathleen Adams, and numerous detailed conversations with friends who had taken 'Writing and Being" led to my devoted use of the journal as a therapeutic and creative tool. It changed the way I experienced writing.

In this course, the miracle that is language is taken back and used for healing. Writers are encouraged to move from personal work to powerful public work. He begins his course with a who am I? collage. This includes: "What is important to you?" a favorite epigraph or quotation and answering the question "What do you focus on now in life?" People include pictures of family, friends and pets. Then the writers are asked what writers move them to a powerful relationship with the creative word written and spoken.

Lynn emphasizes that vulnerability creates listening in other people. People's words are important. He creates a feather circle of writers. Collaboration is emphasized. They are a group of writers. Tom said I should tell my students: It takes a lot of courage to be in this room. Everyone here has made it to this point and is a survivor. Know that being whole is important. You made it here now. Write and follow it where it takes you. That is where the work is for you now. Tom emphasized that I must tell the students how the journal has worked for me. Take myself and my experiences and my books into the classroom. Show them how I am turning on to life and being. Tell them this is the hardest class you will ever take but you will never speak more highly of a course. I think about this. My vulnerability will create my credibility for them in this endeavor of personal writing. Will it work?

20 March

While in Arizona I decide to meet with Lynn and talk about transferring his ideas into an urban special needs setting. Lynn encourages me to model for my students by writing every day myself. This is also about my own explorations. Tell them there are no demands for disclosure. Tell real stories. The journal is a personal private space. The stories may then be made public through revision. This should be a safe supportive place for writers. Lynn told me the story of his work at a juvenile detention center.

The students liked journal writing and when one student escaped he heard the others say "he ran and I hope he took his journal with him." I asked about discipline problems and how to respond to some of the very nasty things students say to each other and to teachers. Lynn said he tells them that their behavior is "pretend" behavior and in this room you must "care" about yourself, about doing the work and about other people. To stay in this room you must pretend to care. This counters the other behavior which is a reflection of the violent media culture that the student is projecting back at us. He emphasized telling them that we as a group are going to publish a book of our writings. He showed me the beautiful bound copies of his previous classes' work.

Lynn's work is now a book, *Writing and Being: Taking Back Our Lives Through the Power of Language*. In the book he says this endeavor is "about taking back the miraculous gift of our language and using it as 'an instrument of creation.' " He writes that what he most wants any student to take away from the book or the class is that ten years from now you will be writing at midnight at the kitchen table, not for an assignment but because you are hurting, grieving or confused or you are collecting some small joys of your day or because you need to let go of anger; Especially because you are a writer, a lifelong writer. Could I give this powerful tool to my students?

later 20 March

I feel a little lost at home amid relatives from everywhere who are here to celebrate my parent's 50th anniversary. Though I love the Southwest and my family and miss them every day that I am in the East, this world seems so far away from my world in the East. Then I spend an entire day on an airplane flying back to Massachusetts. The passenger next to me comments on the psychological nature of book I am reading, *The Peaceable Classroom* by Mary Rose O'Reilley. This book, given to me by Lynn Nelson, opens much to me. It captures much of the philosophy of teaching that I gained as an undergraduate and it is written in a compelling personal, exploratory style. This gives justification to my approach to teaching and writing. The most important question of her work is "Is it possible to teach English so that people stop killing each other?" She links her insistence on truth telling as the cornerstone of writing with her "teaching derived from her focus on *peaceableness* or *nonviolence*" (ix). She asks the question "What if we were to take seriously the possibility that our students have a rich and authoritative inner life, and tried to nourish it rather than negate it?" (152) In the foreword, written by Peter Elbow, he concludes:

> I talk about freewriting, private writing, keeping a journal, the ability to have dialogue with oneself. Yet when O'Reilley talks about the inner life as she does in this book, she makes me realize that I and most of the profession have been forgetting something central. If I remembered it more; if I asked myself, "What does today's teaching plan have to do with my students' inner life? and with my inner life?" Then I think I would teach differently: better, less frantic, less troubled, less chronically torn, with more calm assurance. (xi)

O'Reilley's own writing style embodies the essence of the style I have been working toward in my own writing. She describes her own writing style: "I have made it out of my daily life as a teacher; indeed, I think writing can be rather like making a meal out of things you have in the kitchen. You don't have to go out for exotic ingredients...."

She further explains:

> This book then is not a how-to manual, still less an argument developed from premise to conclusion. It's a collection of stories, tropes, and images that nudge up against each other and try to reproduce the "analysis" as an experience, an experience I hope the reader will share the living-of. Instead of constructing an argument in theoretical terms, I am trying to "make it happen," to give you a sort of laboratory insight into the issues and problems. (xvii)

Hers is a sort of anti-academic, academic justification for drawing the many strands of my education and my life together. I would later reflect on this as I thought about why I, an English major, was getting my secondary teaching certificate at a divinity school. Others are studying for parish ministry, and I am trying to learn how to teach writing to those people society has forgotten.

TEACHING:

3 April

Note: I who write in my journal every day have not written for 13 days due to my exhaustion upon beginning to teach my own two classes.

I feel as if I have been away from myself because of my internship, its all-consuming nature. I don't know how I would begin to describe the experience of teaching American myth and personal writing to urban special needs students—every one a story that would break your heart and every one trying hard to survive both in the outside world and in the special world of this alternative school. I am exhausted. I have been working so hard. I am not sure if I could imagine working permanently in an environment that is as emotionally charged and demanding as this school. In the midst of all this pain and chaos there are some beautiful moments—moments of connection.

I've described my classes in this way: "American Myth: Whose American Dream?": Through popular culture such as film, television and music, we will discover the structures of myth and story. How do various groups tell the story of America?

"Personal Writing": We will create our own personal journal or idea-book and learn how to use this as a tool for everything from getting jobs, getting into college to transforming our personal lives. We will also learn how to take passages from the journal and turn them into public writing.

I have about seven students in each of my classes. Some I have worked with before. We have some amazing conversations. Students offer much insight into this question of American myth and I am amazed by some of their writing. We also have angry exchanges about everything from how I treat some students differently to issues of race. On a bad day one student, whom I felt I had a good relationship with, proclaimed loudly that he thought all white people were evil, were devils. I learn the enormity of the task I have been asked to complete. My personal writing class doesn't readily buy the concept of the personal journal. So, we work hard against their resistance the entire term.

7 April

Deep confidence ... it's the knowledge that you can still find peace and gratification within yourself whether or not you can master the piano or wow the audience with that speech.

—from *Ending the Struggle Against Yourself,* by Stan Taubman

Man (sic) seems to be a herd animal who is often in trouble with his herd.

—from Wilfred Bron *On Groups*

I am homesick for the West. I learn the intricacies of behavior management, kicking kids out of class and being asked what color I think God is after the comment that surely because I am white I will see God as white. We cover a lot of ground. I have learned that almost anything in the world can happen in a forty-five minute period of time. My closest friend tells me that in the midst of all the stress of my teaching environment, the most important thing I can do is "go back in—suit up and go back in."

Later I would take further comfort in Mary Rose O'Reilley's words:

> But I stay in teaching because all the models we have for spiritual process—religious, mythic, what have you—tell us that it doesn't matter whether we are right or wrong or successful, but merely that we remain faithful to a vision. And that when it's easy it isn't worth much. So let me repeat and rephrase: because teaching is some kind of spiritual inquiry, what we learn is more important than what they learn." (110-11)

SNOW DAY:

10 April

Thank God whatever color she is. No school. I am able to sleep and read.

17 April

At the end of spring vacation I write this entry: Now I want to write about my anxiety about going back in to teach. Teaching at this school requires a great deal of inner strength and courage and also an understanding of what it is like to go to school when you are emotional . . . when you feel anxiety and I know these feelings as a teacher. My personal life is also interwoven in my work and sometimes difficult. I know and want to give my students what they need to be successful and this is no small task and may not even be a healthy task to take on. I see a spirit of resilience in their writing and in their lives and I would like to nurture this. Every class period no matter how hostile or frenetic the class is, most manage to express thoughts through writing, an accomplishment that shows incredible resilience and survival technique.

ON A GOOD DAY:

25 April

On this day after a week of what felt like teaching in a battle zone, no one showed up for American Myth class. It was amazing to survey the empty peaceful room and think about the quiet—the timely break I had been given. This in contrast to the loud, angry, dynamic way that learning usually took place third period, American Myth. In place of this the universe had given me one student half-way through the period. This student who had only been to class one or two other times was now ready to listen. We talked about her like of Disney movies and some important and tragic events of her life and the ways she liked to write about them. She promised me stories and myths and asked if I wanted to go to the health fair with her. A peaceful encounter.

Then during fourth period, personal writing class, Isolete began writing a poem about the photograph I had her take of another student. She worked hard on the poem, as we all listened to music and talked about our favorite music. This is how I had envisioned teaching. Then, Isolete, who had told me every day that she wasn't going to write and didn't like writing class, this same young woman stayed after the bell had rung, still working intently on her poem, an extraordinary one about the girl on the window sill.

Thursday afternoons rather than teach another class, I tutor one student. I always look forward to working with this particular student. She is sensitive and mature. She tells me she loves writing and that she writes every night. She writes to work through and understand things. She agreed to work with me on an important project about what is needed to help students succeed in school. In a Zen moment, I showed her Lynn's *Writing and Being*, which I had presented to my personal writing class, which met it with much resistance. But here in this moment, Kellie said this is a great book. It must be exciting to know the author. She liked the exercises in the book and I told her we could copy some of them out for her.

In this moment I felt a sense of accomplishment toward one of the goals I had in teaching writing here and that was to take some of these journal ideas to people who would use them. Kellie and I both work together—writing about our week and answering the questions about student success.

1 May

As I think of my research I frame the question: How do students learn when incredible trauma is present in their lives? How do you make space for the trauma, that is a part of these students lives, in the classroom and the curriculum? There is an academic debate going on about the appropriateness of using journals in the classroom. The struggle is about whether students may reflect on their personal lives. In "Journals, Diaries, and Academic Discourse," Cynthia Gannett reflects on the opposition to use of journals in school:

> Arguing for the abolishment of personal journals in composition at the secondary level, John Hollowell asks: "Do you really want to read entries on child abuse, group

> sex, alcoholism, or wife beating?"(Hollowell and Nelson, 14). ... To the extent that these attacks are taken seriously, women's discourse traditions and women's experience and knowledge will continue to be muted or silenced in the academy. Child abuse, and incest, and other forms of violence against women will not disappear just because they can't be written about, nor will these experiences stop having profound effects on students as learners. Indeed, writing about the events that silence and fragment children (female, male, minority, or white) can help them heal sufficiently to see themselves as knowers once again. (126)

Gannett continues with a powerful reason to allow this kind of writing into the classroom:

> And if that writing makes us as teachers uncomfortable, we must remember how much more uncomfortable these events must be to endure, and we must at least acknowledge the courage it takes to break those silences, to try for the truth. While teachers may legitimately feel that they cannot take on the roles of professional healers, they should not deny the curative potential of writing itself and its relation to knowing (Baumlin and Baumlin). (126)

I began to ask these questions about healing and writing when I thought about graduate education. My closest friend and I had each experienced personal trauma while completing degrees in English. Some things sustained and some restrained. Different aspects of writing and reading, and teaching literature had allowed each of us to address some important issues and ultimately had allowed each of us to survive and reframe, or "restory," our life stories.

Wayne Muller has even suggested there may be a particular kind of wisdom "born of hurt [that] can become a powerful source of strength and peace" (back cover). He writes "Childhood pain encourages us to watch things more closely, to listen more carefully, to attend to the subtle imbalances that arise within and around us. We develop an exquisite ability to feel the feelings of others, and we become exceptionally mindful of every conflict, every flicker of hope or despair, every piece of information that may hold some teaching for us."

He also frames the questions of importance to those who have suffered greatly:

> The spiritual search you inherited as a child of family pain is at once a profoundly confusing, exciting, and

> intimate dialogue with your heart and spirit. Indeed, the persistent questions that occupy the heart of the wounded child are invariably the same questions pondered by the saints, seekers, and spiritual teachers of the world: Why must we have pain? Where do we belong? What is most important in our lives? How can we recognize what is beautiful and true? How may we be joyful? How do we learn to love?

As teachers, we can be aware of these kinds of questions and incorporate them into curriculum. We also must be aware of the nature of working with trauma. Judith Lewis' comprehensive work begins with an exploration of the reasons our culture tries to silence trauma victims. She writes that "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma" (1). For this reason making space for exploring these issues whether in the form of diaries, journals or personal essays is critical: "Because the traumatic syndromes have basic features in common, the recovery process also follows a common pathway."

The fundamental stages of recovery are establishing safety, reconstructing trauma story, and restoring connection between survivors and their community" (3). I assert that all teachers must be aware of these aspects of human trauma. Perhaps the most striking insight I take from *Trauma and Recovery* is her statement "No one can face trauma alone. If a therapist finds herself isolated in her professional practice she should discontinue working with traumatized patients until she has secured an adequate support system" (153). We must remember as teachers that we are up against the same stress. We have the same vulnerability. Overall, because trauma must not be faced alone, we should allow space for it in our student's writing tasks. As Deborah Anne Dooley has said, "Public language that continues to address writing solely as a "skill" rather than as a process reflecting multifaceted relational dimensions of the human experience marks the limitations and sometimes outright wrongheadedness of theories on writing failure" (208). She writes about her own class that incorporates ideas of anger and intimacy into the curriculum:

> Both—the anger and the intimacy—have been the subject of some significant ridicule among my peers. Both, because they belong to the body, are considered anathema to the acquisition of knowledge and are consequently forbidden in most schools. Both, in the context of the violence and the denial that marks our current cultural

> experience, have been the subject of some puzzlement and resistance among my students. Their schooling has provided them with precious little to account for the presence of these in the classrooms where they have been sitting for the twelve or so years before they came to college. (204)

She concludes that the inclusion of women's personal narrative into the curriculum will result in illuminating the "false dichotomy between. ... who we are. ... and what we know. ... has been" (209). She further demonstrates that "its storytelling impulse offers to contemporary teachers fruitful possibilities for analyzing the nature of students' writing problems and working in a way that addresses the split between students' private worlds and the public demands of the academy and the larger worlds of discourse" (209). Most importantly she says this inclusion of women's narrative: "validates the critical need for students to discover their own voices so that they can make authentic choices among the selves in life's numerous rhetorical situations that will demand their story be told" (209).

All of this meditation on trauma and the telling of one's story comes into sharp relief against the work I am doing at this alternative high school and against my students' stories. Teaching at this school is about building relationships and allowing space for trauma and recovery. Learning only takes place if it is student centered and worthwhile. Curriculum is adjusted for the daily group dynamic as well as for the emotional and pathological needs of the student. I have never generated so much curriculum in my life but there is a fierce creativity about the process (for us all).

2 May

Finally -- a good day at school. I am definitely taking back my power. That feels good. I really care about these students. I know their realities are hard. The pain and anger is intense. Sometimes I can get them to channel this into writing and sometimes they just choose to press buttons. I just have to tell students to leave. It's the only way to take back my power and to set limits with them so that they will understand and behave. It feels good to move into being stronger. One of the students I tutor one-on-one has been helping me with a project about what it takes to be successful in school in spite of problems. I will open the question to other students as well. Also, at a conference I propose a panel of my student writers for an upcoming conference on multicultural voice. When I tell my students some seem responsive.

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS

16 May

I had been at my lowest point several days ago. Nothing made sense. Sadness pervaded. I was then able to talk to my supervising teacher about how hard the work felt and the deep feeling that I had around this. She was able to give me a name for the deep sadness that I felt. She said it had to do with the sadness, negativity and cynicism of the students and their lives. Sometimes that feeling pervades. As I understood the nature of doing this kind of work, some of the sadness eased and I was able to be more present to the work at hand. I was then able to write the following:

> Something has shifted in me. I feel much better as I write about school and writing from a more hopeful, more peaceful perspective. My American myth class, which has been openly hostile and negative, today was able to sustain, quiet peaceful work. This means I write from a different place. I feel as if I have come through to a different understanding of the work I do here. I know that I am doing good work and I have more power and authority because I have been there and I trust my interactions and I have learned to fight back at the negativity.

STUDENT WRITING

3 May

> *But take hope, for* ***writing is magic****. Even the simplest act of writing is almost supernatural, on the borderline with telepathy. Just think: We can make a few abstract marks on a piece of paper in a certain order and someone a world away and a thousand years from now can know our deepest thoughts. The boundaries of space and time and even the limitations of death can be transcended.* (281)
>
> —From *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler

This is the evocative question that I write for Kellie and later use for other students:

In order to help other students, write what it is like to go to school and be a good student in spite of any problems you have; especially important is writing about what has helped you to succeed.

Kellie G. writes:

I think that in 90% of the schools in America there is no fun. Regular public schools don't realize how important it is to students to think of school work as fun. It could be something a student hates but that's the teacher's job to make it stick in the kid's mind and the only way to do that is to learn to have fun. In my school everyone is treated equal. We call teachers by their first names. Teachers talk to us whereas most teachers in other schools talk down to students because they have all the power and their name is Mrs. or Mr. in front of their names. Does that make them special? NO, because I'll tell you my experience. The teachers here at X talk and treat us just the way they want to be treated. If we get something wrong, they teach us the right way. I have been to many different schools even in other states besides Massachusetts. And in every school I did not find more than one teacher who knew to teach from a teen's point of view. A teen point of view is the way a teen sees it, not the way the teacher sees it. Not many teachers will stop and take the time to see through the eyes of a teen.

Another student, Jeff B. writes:

What helps me is 50% me, 40% family and 10% teachers. I figure like this if I go to school, excel and be the best that I can be, I'll be rewarded in the long run. A lot of people drop out of school or their getting suspended because they think that it's the cool thing to do. Most teenagers can't get by the peer pressure and they follow the crowd doing the wrong thing when they should be in school. What makes me such a good student is my self the support I get from my family and peers and what really makes me a good student or the bad students the retards and the drop outs I see how their life is and I don't want to end up like that. That's why I push my self even harder to stay out of that path. Good is not good enough for me I want to be the best that's why I work hard to be the best at what I do or if there's a test I study. If there's a quiz I remember.

Mike W. writes:

I think what has helped me to succeed was a smaller school less kids in a class and I needed a little break away from the high school and the teachers here let you work at your own pace and do what you have to do to get your work done.

Eric M. writes:

The thing(s) that help you be a good student are: listening to the advice of teachers, setting your own goals and reaching them, having good attendance, doing your work and really putting your mind to your goals. And listen to what people say.

Daniel D. writes:

To succeed is probably something everyone wants. It may be in different things like life, sports, job careers, families and etc. It's not easy to succeed in what you want,

> for example school. The reason I chose school as an example is because it's the foundation for practically everything you want to succeed in.
>
> As everyone knows school can be pleasant, or troublesome. It can be exciting or tedious. It can be useful or useless. Some of the things that can keep some people from succeeding in school are parents who really don't care, or trouble with other students, peer pressure, drugs, teachers who don't really care and etc. Know for every problem there's a solution. For example for the teens who feel their parents don't care about them or their education, you must remember you're not trying to succeed for them but for yourself and your kids if you plan to have any. The things I feel that are the biggest threshold for a lot of teens are peer pressure and drugs. Everyone wants to fit in but not everyone will use drugs to fit in. Some will use sports, reading or writing, doing volunteer work. I can sit here and list a million things you can do to fit in and succeed in life but you've got to explore your own interest.

One of my favorite responses was by David M., who generally writes only with my constant attention. This time, in one of my best teaching experiences, he took the question outside of class, wrote the response, burst into class and read it aloud:

> I think going to this school is easier than any other school and it's also smaller and teachers can help you one on one, other schools they can't. They don't have enough time for everyone. And they can help you with problems here. Any other place I don't think they can really help you.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

19 May

By writing this study in the form of a journal I have tried to make some important points about writing and about writing process. First, the academic essay is not always the most accessible or appropriate form for impassioned writing. This study breaks convention. Personal is interwoven with academic. Questions are raised. Images are juxtaposed and different voices meet on the page. Second, I want to show how valuable it can be to keep a personal journal and then excerpt and polish some entries for publication. Much of this was written in my own personal journal when I had no idea it would find its way onto these pages. The practice of keeping the journal allowed me to understand something about the practice and process of teaching, which is the third part of this study. To understand something of teaching, every day: Work hard. Write about what is important and reflect on it later. Something about the ritual and the forthrightness of the rhythm allows for creativity, allows for learning.

20 May

The act of writing brings some of us pleasure. It feels like something worthwhile to do. The act of working together on writing channels much of our anger and pain. Somewhere at the edge of the world, we write. We survive.

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Michael Massurin, who has sent us two other articles which have appeared in earlier issues of ΣΚΟΛΕ, is still, as far as I know, an inmate at Collins (NY) Correctional Facility. He's learned a lot being inside the joint! I sometimes think more of us would do well to spend some time in the same school.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE: TEACHING OUR CHILDREN NEW STRATEGIES

by Michael Massurin

> Perhaps the beginning of gaining strength is becoming aware of the bad choices you make.
>
> — William Glasser, M.D.

Once again people stop and shake their head in disbelief as we learn about yet another violent and shocking tragedy committed by one of our youth. Shooting or stabbing each other with kitchen knives. Viciously assaulting or killing family members, neighbors or their teachers. Throwing younger kids out of windows to their death or senselessly beating a baby as it lay in a crib. The cycle of violence seems to spin endlessly out of control. Think for a minute when was the last time you heard or read about a violent act? Unfortunately the answer comes too quickly for many of us.

Violence is spreading throughout our country at an alarming rate and with devastating results. It has reached the point where it is being viewed as a public policy issue. The Center for Disease Control is working in conjunction with the National Institute of Justice to better understand and prevent violent crime and injury. In addition, the American Medical Association has also formed a partnership with the National Institute of Justice to look into and address this issue. While it is true that the current political climate with its get tough on crime attitude may be driving this agenda in part, it is also true that violence in many communities is real, growing and hurting far too many people. Sadly the response to this is often who can we blame or how can we make punishments even tougher. Other than scapegoating, communities need to look at root causes and develop viable solutions that address the problems of violence and our youth. Current policies have not done enough to improve communities or schools. We need to break the cycle and teach our youth that violence is not an acceptable solution to any problem or concern.

Before we can begin to consider methodologies to address this, we need to understand where children learn this behavior. Violence is a learned behavior and the opportunities to absorb this exist in every facet of our culture. Early exposure can help to form patterns of behavior that shape our identity. Numerous studies and reports have shown the correlation between exposure to violence and later violent tendencies or acts. Psychologist Jacquelyn Gentry of the American Psychological Association noted the many effects that violence can have on children in the "Violence and the Family" project report. Family and home which should be a safe haven are in many cases the first "classroom" where violence is experienced and learned. Even watching parents fight can be harmful. This report also noted that the acceptance of violence as a way to solve problems or the repeated exposure to violence in the neighborhood, a place children often turn to when there is confusion at home, contributed to the risk factors of violent behavior later in life. Violence can also be a method for establishing power. To a powerless child, creating fear or controlling another person by violence or the threat of it can be heady medicine.

The family, the neighborhood, certainly television and it seems schools are also becoming places where violence is learned and these terrible dramas acted out. In some circles, it has become popular to blame the school systems as the real breeding grounds for violence. Whether they are breeding grounds or merely stages to strut on while committing these mindless acts is a matter of opinion and less of an issue than addressing and eliminating violence. What is very certain about school systems is that overall their environment has drastically changed over the past generation. Computer technology is not the only new development. It seems that the days of the after school fist fight have been replaced with the far more lethal stabbings, turf wars and metal detectors. The facts of life in some school districts are grim. But, that does not mean we should give up hope and write off kids we think may be already beyond our reach. I believe to abandon any child to a life of violence is to admit that society has reached a stage of hopelessness. Although the situation may be discouraging, it is far from hopeless.

Freud said the moral man is not he who is never tempted, but he who can resist his temptations. Children need to learn that anger is just an emotion, a normal part of life. However, what they do with their anger, how they channel it, the decisions they make will help to determine whether it remains an emotion or becomes a violent act. This simple truth eludes many. Many equate anger with violence but one does not necessarily have to follow the other. Children need to be taught the architecture of their anger process and more importantly, how to control it. The choices they make in this area need to be carefully examined and the consequences understood. Ideally, the process of teaching our children these important lessons should be done on many fronts but realistically, with far too many children, the only place to reach them on a consistent basis and have a positive impact may be their school. This is a setting where children spend a great deal of time and have the opportunity to learn many valuable lessons about life. It can and should be a place where they study violence and learn how to better control their behavior and make good decisions if a violent situation arises. A number of schools are already engaged in this activity in some manner. What I hope to do here is expand upon the dialogue taking place and present some models which I am familiar with that can be helpful when it comes to teaching children how to control their anger, make better choices and learn to live non-violently. Just as violent behavior is learned, non-violent strategies can also be learned and incorporated into daily life. For this to happen, children need a safe environment where they can learn and practice. They need structure and direction. Most of all, they need adult support. To give them less, is to rob ourselves of our future.

The following four programs have all been successfully used to help children learn interpersonal and social cognitive skills. This can lead to better coping strategies and socially acceptable behavior. I am only presenting a brief overview of each program. I encourage the reader to seek out more information and if practical, to help their school district institute a structured and ongoing program that can teach non-violent coping strategies and good decision making.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a highly structured model that was originally established as a juvenile justice program. This program consists of three components; Structured Learning, Anger Control Training and Moral Education. In Structured Learning, there are fifty different skills, however, a program using only ten of these has been proven to be effective. These skills outline a step by step procedure for dealing with situations such as keeping out of a fight, dealing with group pressure and responding to anger to name a few. Students role play these situations following steps. It gives them a chance to practice the behavior, be creative and even have some fun. If possible, the role plays are videotaped. This provides firsthand feedback. In Anger Control they learn to identify their anger cues, reduce their anger, think of different consequences their action may hold and then, once in control, move on to a non-violent solution. This is incorporated into Structured Learning as students advance through the program. Finally, the Moral Education component presents various scenarios which are discussed openly. These are based upon Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Reasoning model. Additionally, there are homework assignments and a hassle log which can help students track their behavior. I found the Anger Control component especially useful in breaking down the anger process. Learning to use reducers and think about all the consequences can help to defuse most dangerous situations. The book, *Aggression Replacement Training: A Comprehensive Intervention for Aggressive Youth* by Arnold P. Goldstein and Barry Glick with Scott Reiner, Deborah Zimmerman and Thomas P. Coultry can provide a complete outline of this excellent program.

The decisions we make, be they large or small all have a direct impact on not only our life but the lives of those around and even the community. If the decision is to engage in an act of violence, obviously the effects can be quite profound. Choice Points, another highly structured program created by Jonathan A. Freedman, Ph.D., was specifically developed to help children learn the critical process of decision making.

Everyone wants their child to make good decisions. We expect teenagers to make decisions that will have a bearing on the rest of their life. But how can they do that if they do not clearly understand the dynamics of decision making? This program spells out the steps in this process. It examines various ways to make decisions, their outcomes and consequences. The process of goal setting is also explored. Exercises are easy to understand and also fun. The workbook is laid out so that children can work with it. I liked the way this program explored decision making and helped define clear, achievable goals. To me, good decision making is really the bottom line when it comes to non-violence. A person can have knowledge about how to avoid a conflict and understand the consequences of their acts. However, if they do not make the decision to internalize this knowledge and apply it when the time arises, it is nothing more than interesting facts or trivia. We either teach children how to make good decisions or leave it up to luck. On this, the decision should be quite clear.

The Alternative to Violence Program (AVP) is a program which has been used effectively in many different settings including schools. This program was created by the Quakers in conjunction with many other people. Typically this program is conducted as a two or three day workshop; however, the format can be rearranged for instruction over a number of days or even weeks. Program topics include trust, building community, consensus, empowerment, listening/communication and of course, developing non-violent coping strategies. All of these topics, along with others, are broken down into individual exercises which are clearly spelled out in a manual. Discussions are held in both large and small groups. Some exercises call for one-on-one talks. There are exercises called "Light and Livelies" which provide students with a chance for play and fun. Again roleplays are utilized to help students internalize the mechanics of non-violent coping. Lots of brainstorming takes place throughout the program. This method can help children broaden their horizons when it comes to problem solving. This program has a Basic, Advanced and Trainers component which can provide more than enough material for children of all age ranges. Over the years I have participated in a number of these workshops. Each one was a powerful experience in their own way. The listening, empowerment and building community exercises I found to be especially useful. Teaching a child to feel good about themselves and really listen to what others are trying to say can go a long way towards helping them avoid the web of violence which too many get entangled in.

Mediation has long been a favorite practice within the business and legal communities. Recently some of these same techniques have found their way into our schools. There is no one specific program I can offer the reader here. Rather what I wish to discuss is the concept of peer mediation. The whole power of this approach lies in the fact that students who have been trained as mediators are called upon to mediate the problems of fellow students. Other than adults offering suggestions/solutions or laying down the law, students take it upon themselves to come up with the answers. Student mediators are taught how to listen to both sides, identify key issues, arbitrate differences and if possible, reach an agreement that is acceptable to all. There is some adult supervision but the fact that students are mediating their own problems can be very empowering. Mediation may not stop a fight but it can resolve other touchy issues which carry the potential for violence at some future point. I have utilized this process in a number of different situations and found it to be quite effective. The fact that everyone is working together on a solution makes this approach a winner.

James Alan Fox, Dean of the College of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University in Boston, has predicted that within the next decade we may see a marked rise in violent crime. A large share of this will be committed by children and/or teenagers. This segment of the population typically commit the largest portion of violent crime according to criminal justice statistics. The children now labeled as "super predators" may prove to be the most vicious, violent and dangerous group of children society has ever encountered. Should we merely wait to see if this prediction comes true or take steps now to try to prevent this tragedy? Logic would dictate that society needs to take action now, such as enacting non-violence programs throughout schools which may help diffuse some of the violence that exists today and stem the coming tide. It is better to teach coping strategies and good decision making now, to as many children as possible, than to pay a bloody price later.

As I stated earlier, I hope this article will help to expand upon existing dialogues and wake others up to the dire need for programs that teach our children these needed non-violent coping strategies. I can speak on this topic because unfortunately, my life has been shaped by violence in may ways. I grew up in a family where violence was the norm. I took this "knowledge" with me to school and eventually the street where I become involved in gangs, drugs and crime. Violence is a constant factor that permeates that whole sub-culture. When all you know is violence, you become numb to it. You reach a point where you do not care about yourself or others. This is a dangerous situation which eventually leads to pain, suffering and loss. Because I had this attitude and chose to associate with others who didn't care, like myself, someone I knew and respected ended up being killed. My violent actions are partially to blame. I could claim to be a product of my environment but the truth is, violence is a choice. A bad choice.

While I did not have the tools I needed or have today to deal with life, I still had the power of choice. There is pain in speaking about what I did. But neither pain nor remorse will undo the violence or suffering. Speaking out, however, may help to educate and prevent others from heading down this path which can only hurt others and themselves. We already have enough suffering; what we need more of is healing. By educating our youth we can begin to break this endless cycle of violence which is currently sweeping our society. I had to come to prison to become an expert on non-violence. It seems ironic. Incarceration, a long and continuing process of self-examination, growth and participation in many different non-violence programs has allowed me to reach this state of expertise. Obviously it would have been better to learn this knowledge elsewhere, such as school and also less costly to society. When children begin to recognize that engaging in any kind of violence is a bad choice, they are taking the first step in breaking the cycle. For those who do not know how to take that first step, we need to help them, to give them the skills and knowledge they need to resist and avoid violence at home, in schools, in churches and in the community. Working together, we can break the cycle of violence.

Arthur Gladstone also sent us the following reprint. It appears in The Case Against the Global Economy, *edited by Gerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith and published by Sierra Club Books. We are using it with permission from the author and the publisher. The book in its entirety will be reviewed in a coming issue of the* Journal of Family Life.

SHARING ONE SKIN

Okanagan Community

by Jeannette Armstrong

Jeannette Armstrong is Okanagan, a member of the traditional council of the Penticton Indian Band in British Columbia, and is director of the En'owkin Centre, a school that teaches traditional Okanagan philosophy and practice. She is also a well-known activist on indigenous sovereignty issues and has been especially engaged in the international resistance to the Genome Diversity Project, which gathers Native genetic materials for eventual commercial exploitation.

In this chapter, Armstrong observes some key differences between the Okanagan views and practices of community—practices that have proven successful for thousands of years—and the views and practices of the dominant society, particularly focusing on psychological variations.

Armstrong's books include two works for children, as well as Native Creative Process *(1991, with renowned Native architect Douglas Cardinal), a very popular novel,* Slash *(1985), and a collection of poetry.*

IDENTITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

I am from the Okanagan, a part of British Columbia that is much like most of California in climate—very dry and hot. Around my birthplace are two rock mountain ranges: the Cascades on one side and the Selkirks on the other. The river is the Columbia. It is the main river that flows through our lands, and there are four tributaries: the Kettle, the Okanagan/Smikamean, the San Poil, and the Methow.

My mother is a river Indian. She is from Kettle Falls, which is the main confluence of the Columbia River near Inchelieum. The Kettle River people are in charge of the fisheries in all of the northern parts of the Columbia River system in our territories. The Arrow Lakes and the tributaries from the Kettle flow south through the Columbia Basin. My great-grandmother's husband was a salmon chief and caretaker of the river in the north.

My father's people are mountain people. They occupied the northern part of British Columbia, known as the Okanagan Valley. My father's people were hunters—the people in the Okanagan who don't live in the river basin. They were always a separate culture from the river people. My name is passed on from my father's side of the family and is my great-grandmother's name. I am associated with my father's side, but I have a right and a responsibility to the river through my mother's birth and my family education.

So that is who I am and where I take my identity from. I know the mountains, and, by birth, the river is my responsibility: They are part of me. I cannot be separated from my place or my land.

When I introduce myself to my own people in my own language, I describe these things because it tells them what my responsibilities are and what my goal is. It tells them what my connection is, how I need to conduct myself, what I need to carry with me, what I project, what I teach and what I think about, what I must do and what I can't do. The way we talk about ourselves as Okanagan people is difficult to replicate in English. Our word for *people*, for *humanity*, for *human beings*, is difficult to say without talking about connection to the land. When we say the Okanagan word for ourselves, we are actually saying "the ones who are dream and land together." That is our original identity. Before anything else, we are the living, dreaming Earth pieces. It's a second identification that means human; we identify ourselves as separate from other things on the land.

The word Okanagan comes from a whole understanding of what we are as human beings. We can identify ourselves through that word. In our interaction, in our prayer, we identify ourselves as human as well, different from birds and trees and animals. When we say that, there is a first part of the word and an s; whenever you put an s in front of any word, you turn it into a physical thing, a noun. The first part of a word refers to a physical realm.

The second part of the word refers to the dream or to the dream state. *Dream* is the closest word that approximates the Okanagan. But our word doesn't precisely mean *dream*. It actually means "the unseen part of our existence as human beings." It may be the mind or the spirit or the intellect. So that second part of the word adds the perspective that we are mind as well as matter. We are dream, memory, and imagination.

The third part of the word means that if you take a number of strands, hair, or twine, place them together, and then rub your hands and bind them together, they become one strand. You use this thought symbolically when you make a rope and when you make twine, thread, and homemade baskets, and when you weave the threads to make the coiled basket. That third part of the word refers to us being tied into and part of everything else. It refers to the dream parts of ourselves forming our community, and it implies what our relationships are. We say, "This is my clan," or, "This is my people. These are the families that I came from. These are my great-grandparents," and so on. In this way I know my position and my responsibility for that specific location and geographic area. That is how I introduce myself. That is how I like to remember who I am and what my role is.

One of the reasons I explain this is to try to bring our whole society closer to that kind of understanding, because without that deep connection to the environment, to the earth, to what we actually are, to what humanity is, we lose our place, and confusion and chaos enter. We then spend a lot of time dealing with that confusion.

SANITY, SELF, PLACE

As a child of ten, I once sat on a hillside on the reservation with my father and his mother as they looked down into the town on the valley floor. It was blackcap berry season, and the sun was very warm, but there in the high country, a cool breeze moved through the overshading pines. Bluebirds and wild canaries darted and chirped in nearby bushes, while a meadowlark sang for rain from the hillside above. Sage and wild roses sent their messages out to the humming bees and pale yellow butterflies.

Down in the valley, the heat waves danced, and dry dust rose in clouds from the dirt roads near town. Shafts of searing glitter reflected off hundreds of windows, while smoke and grayish haze hung over the town itself. The angry sounds of cars honking in a slow crawl along the black highway and the grind of large machinery from the sawmill next to the town rose in a steady buzzing overtone to the quiet of our hillside.

Looking down to the valley, my grandmother said (translated from Okanagan), "The people down there are dangerous, they are all insane." My father agreed, commenting, "It's because they are wild and scatter anywhere."

I would like to explain what they meant when they said this. I do not wish to draw conclusions about the newcomers' culture or psychology. However, I do wish to highlight some differences between the mainstream view and the Okanagan view of self, community, surroundings, and time and to explain something of the Okanagan view of a healthy, whole person. I comment on these things only as I personally perceive them. I do not speak for the

Okanagan people, but my knowledge comes from my Okanagan heritage.

The Four Capacities of Self

The first difference I want to explore is our ideas of what we are as human beings, as individual life forces within our skins. I'd also like to explore how we might think of ourselves in relation to the unseen terrain we traverse as we walk the land and in consequence how we perceive the effect on the world around us.

When we Okanagans speak of ourselves as individual beings within our bodies, we identify the whole person as having four main capacities that operate together: the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self. The four selves have equal importance in the way we function within and experience all things. They join us to the rest of creation in a healthy way.

The physical self is one part of the whole self that depends entirely on the parts of us that exist beyond the skin. We survive within our skin and inside the rest of our vast "external" selves. We survive by the continuous interaction between our bodies and everything around us. We are only partly aware of that interaction in our intellect, through our senses. Okanagans teach that the body is Earth itself. Our flesh, blood, and bones are Earth-body; in all cycles in which Earth moves, so does our body. We are everything that surrounds us, including the vast forces we only glimpse. If we cannot continue as an individual life form, we dissipate back into the larger self. Our body-mind is extremely knowledgable in that way. As Okanagans we say the body is sacred. It is the core of our being, which permits the rest of the self to be. It is the great gift of our existence. Our word for *body* literally means "the land-dreaming capacity."

The emotional self is differentiated from the physical self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self. In our language, the emotional self is that which connects to other parts of our larger selves around us. We use a word that translates as *heart*. It is a capacity to form bonds with particular aspects of our surroundings. We say that we as people stay connected to each other, our land, and all things by our hearts.

As Okanagans we teach that the emotional self is an essential element of being whole, human, and Okanagan. We never ask a person, "What do you think?" Instead we ask, "What is your heart on this matter?" The Okanagan teaches that emotion or feeling is the capacity whereby community and land intersect in our beings and become part of us. By this capacity, we are one with others and all our surroundings. This bond is a priority for our individual wholeness and well-being. The strength with which we bond in the widest of circles gives us our criterion for leadership. It is the source from which the arts spring in celebration and affirmation of our connectedness.

The thinking-intellectual self has another name in Okanagan. Our word for thinking/logic and *storage of information (memory)* is difficult to translate into English because it does not have an exact correlation. The words that come closest in my interpretation mean "the spark that ignites." We use the term that translates as "directed by the ignited spark" to refer to analytical thought. In the Okanagan language this means that the other capacities we engage in when we take action are directed by the spark of memory once it is ignited. We know in our traditional Okanagan methods of education we must be disciplined to work in concert with the other selves to engage ourselves beyond our automatic-response capacity. We know too that unless we always join this thinking capacity to the heart-self, its power can be a destructive force both to ourselves and to the larger selves that surround us. A fire that is not controlled can destroy.

The spirit self is hardest to translate. It is referred to by the Okanagan as a part both of the individual being and of the larger self of which all things are part. We translate the word used for our spirit self as "without substance while moving continuously outward." The Okanagan language teaches us that this self requires a great quietness before our other parts can become conscious of it and that the other capacities fuse together and subside in order to activate it. Okanagans describe this capacity as the place where all things are. It teaches that this old part of us can "hear/interpret" all knowledge being spoken by all things that surround us, including our own bodies, in order to bring new knowledge into existence. The Okanagan says that this is the true self, and it has great power. It is a source for all things and affects all things if we engage it within the rest of our life-force activity. The Okanagan refer to it as the living source of our life.

The second difference I want to explore has to do with community and family. The Okanagan teach that each person is born into a family and a community. No person is born isolated from those two things. You are born into a way of interacting with one another. As an Okanagan you are automatically a part of the rest of the community. You belong. You are them. You are within a family and community. You are that which is family and community; within that you cannot be separate.

All within family and community are affected by the actions of any one individual, and so all must know this in their individual selves. The capacity to bond is absolutely critical to individual wellness. Without it the person is said to be "crippled/incapacitated" and "lifeless." Not to have community or family is to be scattered or falling apart, which is how my father put it that day on the hillside.

The Okanagan refer to relationship to others by a word that means "our one skin." This means that we share more than a place; we share a physical tie that is uniquely human. It also means that the bond of community and family includes the history of the many who came before us and the many ahead of us who share our flesh. We are tied together by those who brought us here and gave us blood and gave us place. Our most serious teaching is that community comes first in our choices, then family, and then ourselves as individuals, because without community and family we are truly not human.

The Language of the Land

The third difference between the Okanagan perception of the self and that of the dominant culture has to do with the "us" that is place: the capacity to know we are everything that surrounds us; to experience our humanness in relation to all else and in consequence to know how we affect the world around us.

The Okanagan word for "our place on the land" and "our language" is the same. We think of our language as the language of the land. This means that the land has taught us our language. The way we survived is to speak the language that the land offered us as its teachings. To know all the plants, animals, seasons, and geography is to construct language for them.

We also refer to the land and our bodies with the same root syllable. This means that the flesh that is our body is pieces of the land come to us through the things that the land is. The soil, the water, the air, and all the other life forms contributed parts to be our flesh. We are our land/place. Not to know and to celebrate this is to be without language and without land. It is to be displaced.

The Okanagan teach that anything displaced from all that it requires to survive in health will eventually perish. Unless place can be relearned, all other life forms will face displacement and then ruin.

As Okanagan, our most essential responsibility is to bond our whole individual and communal selves to the land. Many of our ceremonies have been constructed for this. We join with the larger self and with the land, and rejoice in all that we are. We are this one part of the Earth. Without this self and this bond, we are not human.

Hands of the Spirit

The fourth difference has to do with the idea that, as earth pieces, we are an old life form. As old life forms, we each travel a short journey through time, in which we briefly occupy a space as part of an old human presence on the land.

The Okanagan word for *Earth* uses the same root syllable as the word for our spirit self. It is also the word that refers to all life forces as one spirit. Everything we see is a spirit. Spirit is not something that is invisible, subjective, or in the mind. It exists. We are a microscopic part of that existence. The Okanagan teach that we are tiny and unknowledgeable in our individual selves, but the whole-Earth part of us contains immense knowledge. Over the generations of human life, we have come to discern small parts of that knowledge, and humans house this internally. The way we act has significant effects on earth because it is said that we are the hands of the spirit, and as such we can fashion Earth pieces with our knowledge and therefore transform the Earth. We are keepers of Earth because we are earth. We are old Earth.

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF HEART

The discord that we see around us, to my view from inside my Okanagan community, is at a level that is not endurable without consequences to the human and therefore to everything that the human influences. A suicidal coldness is seeping into and permeating all levels of interaction; there is a dispassion of energy that has become a way of life in illness and other forms of human pain. I am not implying that we no longer suffer for each other as humans but rather that such suffering is felt deeply and continuously and cannot be withstood, so feeling must be shut off.

I think of the Okanagan word used by my father to describe this condition, and I understand it better. Translation is difficult, but an interpretation in English might be "people without hearts."

As I mentioned earlier, the Okanagan self is defined as having four capacities, each separate though fully cooperating when we achieve whole human capacity and wellness.

The emotional self, the part that forms bonds to the larger selves of family, community, and land, is described by a term that translates as "the heart's rhythmical beat," signifying a living being. We say that we are connected to each other, to our land and to all things by our heartbeats; it is a pattern that is in rhythm with others rather than creating dissonance and adversity.

Okanagans say that heart is where community and land come into our beings and become part of us because they are as essential to our survival as our own skin. By this bond, we subvert destruction to other humans and to our surroundings and ensure our own survival.

When the phrase *people without hearts* is used, it means people who have lost the capacity to experience the deep generational bond to other humans and to their surroundings. It refers to collective disharmony and alienation from land. It refers to those who are blind to self-destruction, whose emotion is narrowly focused on their individual sense of wellbeing without regard to the well-being of others in the collective.

The results of this dispassion are now being displayed as large nationstates continuously reconfiguring economic boundaries into a world economic disorder to cater to big business. This is causing a tidal flow of refugees from environmental and social disasters, compounded by disease and famine as people are displaced in the rapidly expanding worldwide chaos. War itself becomes continuous as dispossession, privatization of lands, and exploitation of resources and a cheap labor force become the mission of "peacekeeping." The goal of finding new markets is the justification for the westernization of "undeveloped" cultures.

Indigenous people, not long removed from our cooperative self-sustaining life-styles on our lands, do not survive well in this atmosphere of aggression and dispassion. I know that we experience it as a destructive force, because I personally experience it so. Without being whole in our community, on our land, with the protection it has as a reservation, I could not survive. In knowing that, I know the depth of the despair and hopelessness of those who are not whole in a community or still on their own land. I know the depth of the void. I fear for us all, as the indigenous peoples remaining connected to the land begin to succumb, or surrender. I fear this as the greatest fear for all humanity. I fear this because I know that without my land and my people I am not alive. I am simply flesh waiting to die.

Could it be that all people experience some form of this today? If this is so, it seems to me that it is in the matter of the heart where we must reconstruct. Perhaps it is most important to create communities with those who have the insight to fear, because they share strong convictions. Perhaps together they might create working models for re-establishing what is human in community. But fear is not enough to bind together community, and I cannot help but be filled with pessimism, for what I continue to see is the breakdown of emotional ties between people. I see a determined resistance to emotional ties of any kind to anything.

I see the thrust of technology into our daily lives, and I see the ways we subvert emotional ties to people by the use of communications that serve to depersonalize. I see how television, radio, telephone, and now computer networks create ways to promote depersonalized communication. We can sit in our living rooms and be entertained by violence and destruction and be detached from the suffering of the people. We can call on the phone or send e-mail to someone we may never speak to in person.

Through technology there is a constant deluge of people who surround us but with whom we have no real physical or personal link, so we feel nothing toward them. We get to the condition where we can walk over a person starving or dying on the street and feel nothing, except perhaps curiosity. We can see land being destroyed and polluted and not worry as long as it's not on our doorstep. But when someone is linked to us personally, we make decisions differently. We try harder to assist that person because we (or someone we know) care deeply for the person.

Community is formed by people who are acting in cooperation with each other. Each person is cared for because each is bound to someone else through emotional ties, and all in the community are bound by generations of interactions with one another. Extended family is a healthy, essential part of this. Healthy extended families in community interact with each other over generations through intermarriage and the shared experience of mutual crisis conditions to create customs that sustain them and their offspring and ensure survival.

The customs of extended families in community are carried out through communing rather than communicating. I want to illuminate the significance of communing and point out that through its loss we have become dehumanized. To me, *communing* signifies sharing and bonding. *Communicating* signifies the transfer and exchange of information. The Okanagan word close in meaning to communing is "the way of creating compassion for." We use it to mean the physical acts we perform to create the internal capacity to bond.

One of the critical losses in our homes in this society originates in the disassociation we experience as a result of modern "communications" technology. People emotionally associate more with characters on television than with people in their lives. They become emotional strangers to each other and emotional cripples in the family and community.

In a healthy whole community, the people interact with each other in shared emotional response. They move together emotionally to respond to crisis or celebration. They "commune" in the everyday act of living. Being a part of such a communing is to be fully alive, fully human. To be without community in this way is to be alive only in the flesh, to be alone, to be lost to being human. It is then possible to violate and destroy others and their property without remorse.

With these things in mind, I see how a market economy subverts community to where whole cities are made up of total strangers on the move from one job to another. This is unimaginable to us. How can a person be human while continuously living in isolation, fear, and adversity? How can people twenty yards away from each other be total strangers? I do see that having to move continuously just to live is painful and that close emotional ties are best avoided in such an economy. I do not see how one remains human, for community to me is feeling the warm security of familiar people like a blanket wrapped around you, keeping out the frost. The word we use to mean community loosely translates to "having one covering," as in a blanket. I see how family is subverted by the scattering of members over the face of the globe. I cannot imagine how this could be family, and I ask what replaces it if the generations do not anchor to each other. I see that my being is present in this generation and in our future ones, just as the generations of the past speak to me through stories. I know that community is made up of extended families moving together over the landscape of time, through generations converging and dividing like a cell while remaining essentially the same as community. I see that in sustainable societies, extended family and community are inseparable.

The Okanagan word we have for *extended family* is translated as "sharing one skin." The concept refers to blood ties within community and the instinct to protect our individual selves extended to all who share the same skin. I know how powerful the solidarity is of peoples bound together by land, blood, and love. This is the largest threat to those interests wanting to secure control of lands and resources that have been passed on in a healthy condition from generation to generation of families.

Land bonding is not possible in the kind of economy surrounding us, because land must be seen as real estate to be "used" and parted with if necessary. I see the separation is accelerated by the concept that "wilderness" needs to be tamed by "development" and that this is used to justify displacement of peoples and unwanted species. I know what it feels like to be an endangered species on my land, to see the land dying with us. It is my body that is being torn, deforested, and poisoned by "development." Every bush, plant, insect, bird, and animal that disappears is part of me dying. I know all their names, and I touch them with my spirit. I feel it every day, as my grandmother and my father did.

I am pessimistic about changes happening: the increase of crimes, worldwide disasters, total anarchy, and the possible increase of stateless oligarchies; borders are disappearing, and true sustainable economies are crumbling. However, I have learned that crisis can help build community so it can face the crisis itself.

I do know that people must come to community on the land. The transiency of peoples crisscrossing the land must halt, and people must commune together on the land to protect it and all our future generations. Self-sustaining indigenous peoples still on the land are already doing this and are the only ones now standing between society and total self-destruction. They present an opportunity to relearn and reinstitute the rights we all have as humans. Indigenous rights must be protected, for we are the protectors of Earth.

I know that being Okanagan helps me have the capacity to bond with everything and every person I encounter. I try always to personalize everything. I try not to be "objective" about anything. Everything becomes valuable to me in that way. I try where I can to engage others in the same way. I fear those who are unemotional, and I solicit emotional response whenever I can. My community and my family and thus my land have increased greatly. I do not stand silently by. I stand with you against the disorder.

the Journal of Family Life

Read what one of our reviewers says about us -
From: ***New Age Journal's Sourcebook for 1996:***

THE EDITORS of ***the Journal of Family Life,***
A Quarterly for Empowering Families ,

know that family life embraces a whole range of emotions and relationships from birth to death. Each 64-page issue focuses on a theme related to family life—couples, children, grandparents, in-laws, culture, spirituality, money. Although interviews with the likes of *Soul* man Thomas Moore, midwife Ina May Gaskin, and educator John Taylor Gatto spice up the mix, most of the articles are written by regular people sharing their thoughts and experiences. Reading this grassroots *Journal*—which is dedicated to the idea that social change starts with family change—is a bit like having a conversation with wise and interesting neighbors, who admit both their failures and their successes in hopes of lending a helping hand. Future themes include "Mothers," "Living in Balance" and "Lying." Back issues are also available for $4.00 + $1.50 shipping. Past topics include "Children in Families," "Couples," "Having Children (Birth)," "Loss," "Culture," "Mother Earth," "Father Sky," The Karma of Money" and "Generations."

Past issues have featured interviews with people like John Taylor Gatto (#1), Thomas Moore (#2), Ina May Gaskin (#3), Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (#4), Malidoma Somé (5), Seneca Clan Mother Twylah Nitsch (#6), Ken Wilber (#7), Ben Cohen, of Ben & Jerry's (#8) and Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (#9). And, as we say, much, much (and many!) more.

72 Philip St., Albany NY 12202; (518) 432-1578. Quarterly; $20/year; a sustaining subscription ($30) includes a year's free subscription to *ΣΚΟΛΕ*

Here is a poignant heart-piece written by frequent contributor Bill Kaul, sheep-herder, teacher, writer and philosopher from the upland hills of New Mexico. Bill's passionate advocacy of the plight of these children reinforces my awareness of the dreadful damage our schools and our social agencies are doing to the Self Jeanette Armstrong and Richard Lewis (see interview above) are speaking and writing about, but, in struggling to live in our culture as a card-carrying member, Bill embodies also the pain-filled gulf that having a role to play, as he does, in both *worlds—theirs and "ours"—engenders. In this sense—and in expressing his awareness of that gulf and that pain—Bill functions for me as an American conscience. Thanks, pal.*

I'm only sorry this extraordinary heart-sharing didn't get here in time to be included in my Christmas letter—but, a bit late, here it is for the winter issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ! I have been reading it out loud to members of our community, and have realized it begs to be heard as poetry or drama—as if Bill were a medieval troubadour—which he is, among other things! Read it to somebody you love, and it will sing with life and love! Please!

SO ARE YOU A TEACHER, OR WHAT?

Bill Kaul,

Waterflow, New Mexico

Good question. I guess—depending on why someone would ask. Do they mean, *are you working as a teacher with a certificate in a public or private school?* or do they mean, *do you teach others?*

It has to do with occupational prestige, I guess, or pieces of paper, or categories. Who is a teacher and who isn't? and who gets to decide?

Sort of like *who is a counselor?*

Who is a mother? a father? a brother? a sister?

And indeed, who gets to decide? Are teachers trained? or called? or both? or neither? are we all teachers, sisters, brothers. counselors by virtue of being born human? or does it require special training? and if so, where? at universities and colleges?

What is a school, family, office?

A child arrives at my door, at the place where I do business, the place—for me—where I get to try one last time to do something, *anything*, for the child before they are subjected to even more grueling interventions. How this state of affairs came to be, how the child came to arrive at my door, is largely irrelevant.

Well, it's not irrelevant exactly. It's important how people come to utilize a service offered; it speaks to the amount of trust as well as the amount of desperation a child's caretakers feel; it speaks to the amount of trust and the amount of desperation the institutions feel, those entities who pass along problems in the hope someone else might succeed in some agenda for change.

But this train of thought I'm pursuing here is not concerned with how the child comes to be on my doorstep, either dropped off in the parking lot to find their way to me alone or brought in by a concerned parent or provider. I have covered "program building" in another forum recently for those who are interested, but it's really all common sense, anyway, and I'm sure most people who really want to help children will find a way to do it. If they are truly fortunate, they may also be able to make a marginal living as well, but that's another story for another time. Damn paychecks, anyway—I have been reading Nikos Kazantzakis' biography of St. Francis of Assisi lately (he didn't have an office, I noticed) and am comforted that although people who work with children directly every day cannot pursue the bloodspattered trail to sainthood, we can wed poverty and practice love almost for free, thus keeping perhaps a fraction of our souls unfettered and able to fly, perhaps even able to demonstrate flight to others... but I digress, or do I?

I had set out to talk about the child who shows up on my doorstep, and lead from there into feelings of utter powerlessness and then tread around the twin chimeras of hope and despair—a sort of spastic dance—which in the process of discussion would perhaps illuminate a small corner of the world of adults and children and education and future and past. And I began to wax long about pay.

These are not unrelated topics.

How many of the children I see are in my *domain* (I refuse, if possible, to say "office" for some reason probably related to my adolescent fig-fist at the authority figure I have supposedly become, ahem, how many are in my *domain* because they are victims of their family's poverty? In a sense—the best sense—they are *all* victims of poverty, if not in terms of money and pay, then in terms of the poverty of love and nurture all children require at least as much as food.

Indeed, without love and nurture (those groceries for the soul), who has the appetite for comestibles?

So, we can say—or I can say, and will do so—that poverty is what brings each of these children to my door. My step. And I can't do anything. They step in and I am powerless. All I can do is point out doors, steps, openings.

Once they come across my doorstep. That's first.

Because, indeed, it is a door and a step—a door/step. Open the door and step in. There. You get the comfy chair, the ancient salvaged La-zee Boy recliner with nice bits of stuffing to pick at, very comforting that is, stuffing-picking. I get the swivel chair. No stuffing, but I like to swivel so it suits me as well if not better. The parent or other adult sits on the organ bench—it's all that's left, anyway, and since the power is usually off and the old thing can hardly squeak anymore even when it's on, they can press the keys when they're nervous or upset.

I introduce myself to the child first, shake hands, or a good tight grip if they're native (handshaking is impolite) and names: Bill, Johnny, Julie, etc.

Introduce to the parents. Hello, yes, you're upset, eh? No? Hm. Yes?

So, I ask the child (before the parent can offer or preempt)—What's happening? Why are you here?

Dunno, or, Who cares? Or, fuck you. Or a guiltily mumbled explanation of the incidents at school which have brought them here, or—in wonderful rare cases—a five-minute rant about the unfairness of life, the ineptitude of the system, the harshness of school, peppered with suggestions as to how the system could do anatomically impossible things to itself.

Other adult: Bored, ho-hum. Or, hasty explanations of diagnoses and medications and treatment centers, history of "what a good child she used to be," or, genuine concern coupled with despair: "I just don't know what to *do* with him/her." Or, anger—of all types and hurled in all directions, absent fathers, abusive boyfriends ("but he *really loves me*") and schools, agencies, etc.

At any rate, the project is to find out what choices remain for this young person, and perhaps even the old person too. Which doors have been closed, and which of them are locked and bolted, barred from further entry? Which doors remain open, even slightly? Which doors lie hidden behind gates, unknown, perhaps openings to worlds previously unsuspected?

This takes a little time, but not much—have you tried this? Yes, no. Really—? Why didn't it work out? Well, what's really important here? No, I mean really important? (I hope to hear something like Love or the child's name, or even a nod toward a better future: If I don't hear that, then despair has this person fully choked and the struggle is to restore hope: "But there's no point! I'll only screw up again!" "Yes, you probably will.")

Well anyway, dammit, somebody cares. Probably a lot of people. Isn't that worth something?

I went to a hearing for child awhile back to determine whether or not she should be expelled from school; the hearing officer was there, me, the kid and the school counselor. No parent showed up. Bad scene at home: abuse, neglect. Diagnosis: Kid has a bad attitude toward school and is "oppositional-defiant": defies and opposes authority. Duh. Me, too. At least a lot of times. ADHD, too—can't sit still, short attention span. (Dynamic? Active? Curious? Can't have too much of that!) On any drugs—? Won't follow orders, refuses to take her pills. Defiant again. Well, are you willing to change? Your prognosis? Fuck you, man. Just fuck you. Now, with an attitude like that you can't expect anyone to like you, can you, young lady? Yeah--? Kiss my brown ass.

Well, I guess we have to expel her.

Maybe we could hold expulsion in abeyance? Give her another chance?

Another chance to disrupt this school? No, I don't think so.

Where's the parent?

None present. I'm here to represent the child's interests.

Who are you?

Me? I'm blah, blah, blah.... nobody, really.

Anyway, the kid is expelled, and this is OK because really she doesn't need to be in school. The hearing officer really wants the best for the child; the counselor really wants the best for the child; so do I; the child has no clue what's best, except a vague notion that it's up to her to find out and the certain feeling that she can't trust anyone to tell her; so the child is now officially out of school and can't return until next year.

By the way, the charge was possession of alcohol and drugs on school property. Not the Ritalin. Three joints and thermos of vodka, said it made the day go by easier, faster. Of course that's not an adequate defense—at least for a kid.

So, now—on my doorstep again a week or two later. No place to go, nothing to do, and bound to get into trouble. Yep, and so what are the options? What doors can we try, or do we want the box that Jay is bringing out? Choose!

I know this alternative school you could try.

Really? Where?

That's the problem. It's in Arizona.

Do they have a dorm?

No, they're kind of poor—can't afford a dorm.

Maybe, though, we could try... say, don't you have an aunt or something in Arizona?

Yeah, my grandma, but she's sick. (Telephone rings.) Hello. Hello, have you heard from xxzz? she was supposed to have a court hearing for truancy and she didn't show up. (Aside: You had a hearing? I don't know.) She's here now. Truancy, you say? But she was expelled. Oh, I see. Going to take her to YDDC for a psych? How long?

Shit. Maybe when you get back.

Maybe I could leave before they come to get me—they're busy, so it'll be awhile.

Yeah, maybe. But who can take you to grandma?

Grandma can't really keep me there. She's really sick.

I don't know what to tell you. If you run, you'll be in violation of your probation. I don't want anything bad to happen to you.

I know. Look, I'll be OK, but will you do me a favor? Will you keep my poems? The ones I wrote on the computer? I don't want anyone to get them.

Yeah, sure. I'll put them in my locked file.

Keep my disk, too. I'll get them when I come back.

Are you going to walk home now? Yeah. OK.

And so, because there's another couple of folks sitting outside my door, one leaves and another enters.

More choices. Later, maybe, I get a phone call from Aunt so-and-so. Maybe the phone call energizes, gives hope. Maybe it just drains energy and provokes despair... but that's how it is: who can watch hundreds of children being destroyed and feel joy? Can one or two "successes" ever balance the immense dark weight of years of neglect? Can one or two hours or days of gentle caring, exploring choices, emphasizing assets, inoculate against a continuing onslaught of diagnoses, treatments and pushing, shoving—?

Always, the pushing and shoving goes on.

Child care workers, arise. Youth development professionals, arise. These, too, are the children of the gods.

Sent to a special school because of too many absences; in fact, the young lady had 26 absences over a period of two months. She's a good basketball player, has a brother or some sort of sibling, has a mom and another woman who checks up on her. You know, a basic child of the gods.

Not in school, but definitely learning. In fact, I would bet that—following this morning's hasty conference about the kid's absence today, an absence taken while on contract swearing that she wouldn't be absent any more—I would bet that the kid is out learning something today right now, somewhere, with someone. (She had to get someone to call claiming to be her father to excuse her absence; didn't work— the voice was prepubescent. You can bet she and the boy who called learned a lesson from that, or will.) (But don't look for it in any curriculum.)

Anyway, this girl isn't in school. she is out somewhere else, learning something. (But is the place a "school," and is the person she's learning from a "teacher"?) I bet there isn't a lesson plan on file in the "office.")

So when she gets caught, as she will (because, although she's learning, she hasn't become a master yet at ducking and dodging... that'll come when she goes to jail or work...), there will be a *post-getting-caught lesson,* and it will take one of several forms:

1. Lesson One— Understanding consequences. *When you decide to do something, say, ditching school, you must consider the consequences of your choice. There are consequences to everything. One of the most amazing things about humans is their ability to predict outcomes; we are uniquely wired for consequences, for predicting outcomes of choices, for prognosticating the effects to be derived from causes.* Do you understand? *Uh huh.* But I don't really *care...* see, I'm a child of the gods, I'm never gonna die (or if I do, I'll be old then) and so I don't care about consequences handed down by adults. It's like a credit card—I'll max it out first having fun and worry about paying the bill later. And so on.

2 . Lesson Two— Goal setting and Planning for the Future. *You have to decide what you are going to do with your life... how old are you? Sixteen—? You only have two years until you have to get a job and make a living. What shall you do? Where shall you go?* And what training do you need first? (There are no legitimate jobs for enchantresses and enchanters, nor does anyone want to hire daydreamers and wanderers.)

3. Lesson Three— You vs. the state. The state will win. You will be controlled. So why fight, (or, if you're going to fight, fight smart—pick battles small enough to win but big enough to matter.) (Be subversive.) (Put up another facade, be a guerilla.) (But don't count on a revolution.)

4. Lesson Four— You Can't Count on Anyone. so where are your friends now? Who is snitching on you? If you end up in the Boys or Girls School, who will bring you clothes and cards and books and snacks and cigarettes? Your friends? Your parents? Me? Your teachers? *Who really gives a damn about you?*

s. Lessons Five through Nine Million—*whatever else we can think of, whatever other topics lie in our curricular thinking.* For example, we can talk about "refusal skills." Now, this doesn't mean *refusing* to participate in a corrupt, corporate-run society which blames its children for its problems; it doesn't mean *refusing* to knuckle under to illegitimate authority; it doesn't mean *refusing* to honor injustice

and dark, evil worldviews, or even *refusing* to give in to despair and consequences—generally, it means *refusing to participate in those activities which may lead to sex, violence, inebriation or declining social acceptance; that is, it means learning how to JUST SAY NO.*

Flash! Refusal means saying no to things that are bad for you, as long as that doesn't include refusal to participate in the American Dream. *"Ze only proper response to ze von-dimensional machine of destruction is complete rrrrrefusal!" Marcuse sez.* But if you don't participate in the machine it will run over you and crush your bones into the earth, squeeze your spirit out into the ether.

In comes the boy from the reservation. He says that there's a fight outside, so out we go...

Indeed, there is a fight. We stop it. It was almost over anyway. Two girls fighting. Some reason or another. No blood, but probably some bruises. No knives? Guns? Good. The boys were standing around encouraging their respective favorites.

Let's go chill for awhile, then maybe talk.

So we talk. Refusal skills. *She called me a two-cent pussy. She said I was a ho. I don't want your stinkin man. I got my own. You trash-talking bitch.* Refuse to what?

How about consensual skills, then? Acceptance? Love one another? Yikes.

Hello, stupid—this isn't about love. This is about honor and about ownership. She wanted what was mine, and she wanted to put me down in front of everyone, make me look weak.

Why were you guys encouraging this? Why didn't you try to Stop it? *It was cool, huh huh huhuhuh.* I tried to stop it, man. They wouldn't listen.

What did you say?

Yah yah... refuse to fight? Walk away? *Are you crazy—? I'd look like a pussy!*

I thought slavery was over with, illegal.

Huh?

How can you own another human being?

I don't.

You said she was trying to *steal your man.* So she was trying to steal your property ?

Yeah, he's mine.

So you own him.

We own each other.

Each other's slaves.

Right. And I'll kill any two-cent ho that looks at him.

Without clothes, shoes, books or perfume, unemployed and unemployable—our heads in the clouds and feet on the ground, our voices singing to the gods and our feet leaving bloody prints across the rocks and mud, wedded to material poverty and desiring only spiritual bliss.

Until our bellies growl or our loins tremble.

The children's monastery, the children's ascetic camp. The adolescent stylites. They will arise. From the oppressed, come vibrant spiritual upheavals. Mobs of children ...

I can see it! Mobs of ragged smiling children, refusing to eat, work, study or fight. Refusing to buy or sell, to fence or mark as possessed. Only interested in giving, their goal is to humbly show adult America its spiritual nakedness. You hate us now, not because *we are your children, made in your image, But Because We Are Everything You Never Had the Courage to Be: Humble and Generous and Fearing Nothing, even Death Itself.*

But we never said that, children. We never asked you to be like this, giving up everything, seeking nothing but god and each other. forsaking parents, giving everything to the poor and following your bliss. We *never said that you should do that.*

Oh, yes—you said it all the time, especially around Christmas and Easter, Yom Kippur and each Sabbath. You never actually *did* it, but you certainly said it. So, one day. instead of doing what you Do, we began doing what you SAID. A truly radical idea. We decided to live by the principles you SAID were important as if they really WERE important.

No no no no no no, we didn't mean it! We aren't strong enough to follow you. We have— so much to lose so much to let go of we can't

Wake up, man. You have a phone call.

I think it's something about a children's crusade—

Well, meanwhile in the *Real World* two more kids are here. Suspended from school for fighting.

They had to fight, naturally. I mean, the boy—he has several diagnoses—had to hit the other kid over the head with a stick after he spit on him, didn't he? weapons charge? No, a stick isn't a weapon. He's in a BD (Behavior Disordered) classroom and his Ritalin has been increased to two hits a day.

Right now he's playing basketball with a girl who is from another school, got into a fight because of a problem with another girl ("everybody hates her... she's stuck up... she was looking at me funny and wouldn't stop"). Weapons? No way; I just bitch-slapped her a few times. A hand isn't a weapon? No....

So, these two are playing basketball together. Is this curriculum? Yes. And you know what? So far, they have settled (by my count) three disputes over fouls and ball possession without one raised voice or fistfight. *It's my ball! No, it's mine! Let's shoot for it. OK.*

I didn't teach them how to do that—dang. Maybe I'm not a teacher after all.

But then, maybe they aren't students. Maybe they are the leading wave of the next children's crusade, that vast spiritual revolution born of eating too much material fat, creamy sweet yellow goo that is never enough, never, until to eat more is to never be full and yet not be hungry for more, either. More, no—something different, probably. Some different kind of food, offered at better streets, houses and libraries everywhere.

These guys won't be denied their real food, you know. Their gullets are being stuffed so fast with puffy slime that they must puke, even as the televisions yell that there's more and it's NEW and IMPROVED and YOU HAVE TO TRY IT.

If they're crazy we made them so.

If they're truant, leaving was the best choice we gave them.

If they're fighting, it's within the walls of our notions of honor.

Each kid is holding a mirror up to me, a crazy childhood distortion of my own fears and desires and above all, rationalizations and delusions. Of course I could smash the mirror, or rationalize its image away, or focus on the distortions.

But today, just today, I will focus on what of me I see in these images.

And what of you, which is in me.

Love, poverty, hope and obedience, choices. Reflections.

> *Every teacher in Britain should drink daily to "The Day" when there shall be no poor, when factory lasses will not rise at five and work till six. I know that I shall never see the day, but I shall tell my bairns that it is coming. I know that most of the seed will fall on stony ground, but a sower can but sow.*
>
> —*A. S. Neill*

REVIEWS:

CELEBRATING GIRLS: NURTURING AND EMPOWERING OUR DAUGHTERS

by Virginia Beane Rutter
Conari Press (Publishers Group West),
2550 Ninth St., Suite 101, Berkeley, CA 94710; 1996
ISBN: 1-57432-053-2

Reviewed by Nancy Leue

Celebrating Girls is a thought provoking, refreshingly non-linear book about a way of living with girls to support who they are as female individuals and to bolster them against the forces in our society which erode a girl's self-esteem. It is a book concerned with the quality of life. It's not an approach of ready-made solutions, though it does include many examples from many different mothers and daughters. Rather, it speaks of slowing down, becoming more aware of reactions and relationships, enjoying and nurturing each other. And it is a book with which you can start from where you are, with many small and large suggestions. It recognizes that you can keep reclaiming a sense of your own femaleness, become more aware of your own assumptions about being female, and thus better nurture yourself—and better nurture the young females in your life.

Some years ago my older daughter had a passionate involvement with dance, was a member of a dance company. She endured much anguish over not having been endowed with a body genetically predisposed to dance, or that fit the current aesthetic preferences in the dance world. There was much anguish on my part, also. Should I let her continue in an activity that is contributing to dislike of her own body? Do I cut off her access to something that is a true passion? What we did was talk about it (and cry about it), a lot. How do I feel about it now? It was probably the best thing to do in a difficult situation.

Recently, my daughter told me that it was in this dance company that she learned discipline, how to really work for something she badly wanted. Surely this is important for self-esteem; and she has gone on to other passions which suit and nurture her better. Would having read this book have made a difference? I think so. Virginia Ruther connects many experiences which contribute to nurturing femaleness which I had not previously consciously considered in this light. I would have been aware of more ways to support a more positive body image for my daughter, both before and while she was going through this experience, and perhaps better counteracted the negative side of being in the dance company.

Having just read this book, as I go about my daily chores, I find myself thinking about the web of activities and associations contributing to developing a girl's sense of herself. I hear my grandmother saying, "Pretty is as pretty does." What a put-down of beauty—and you'd better not be too assertive, either! I can see the effects in myself, now, and don't want to pass them on. My younger daughter bought a new winter hat the other day. It looked great on her, and I told her so. I also added, "And it will keep your brains warm, also." Silly, perhaps. Not of great consequence, perhaps. And yet, how much of our identity is built up of small incidents. Such statements are one more little link, in passing, saying it's possible, and O.K., to have brains and beauty—or can support any of a number of other aspects of being a total, and female, person.

This younger daughter is a particularly strong-willed and fiery female. Quite dramatic. I think back over the many times we've had to counter the traditional female stereotypes: supporting her buying "boys' toys" with her birthday money when she was afraid her peers would laugh at her, living with plastic vampire teeth for months, scrounging and making the props to go with the series of characters from fantasy books which she chose to be for Halloween (no Sleeping Beauties in this repertoire!). Now she's on the cusp of adolescence. The face paint has given way to white or bronze nail polish, while I ventilate the toxic fumes and say a silent prayer for her liver. I get up ten minutes earlier so that I won't feel frantically late, but instead can enjoy it when she asks me to help her do her hair. All summer I picked up hats at tag sales, with an eye out for variety (and financial bargains) because she was "a hat person." She doesn't actually wear them much, but they obviously have a great deal of meaning for her, and she is the one using hats to help define herself, not me.

She has started talking about hating math, and I've made sure that her teachers know of and are concerned about the current research on middle school girls and mathematics. And as we concern ourselves with "problem behavior" there is a small voice in the back of my mind which keeps asking "Would we be dealing any differently with this if she were a boy?" These are the sorts of relationships and activities dealt with in *Celebrating Girls* which directly support a girl's growth. Other aspects discussed make me look at myself. and the way I am indirectly supporting aspects of femaleness. It's easy to throw out too much of a stereotype. I've been doing a lot of grumbling about preparing meals this last year or so. Maybe I've lost something. Maybe I should buy more fast food or get someone else to cook occasionally so that I can get back into touch with lovingly preparing food for people I love. And I vow to do more talking about the parts of my job that I enjoy, to balance the times I talk about the frustrations and stress. I want my daughters to have a positive expectation of finding work they love. And I'm thinking about whether there are enough other positive female role models in my daughters' lives who reflect their interests. Reading this book is another step in my growing awareness of what being female can mean, and how to guide girls on this journey.

So, is this a book for women only? I don't think so. How much more powerful will be the messages to a young girl if they are coming from both the important women and the important men in her life. And women cannot heal themselves in isolation from men (or, vice versa); it is a journey we are on together.

RAISING A THINKING CHILD WORKBOOK:
The "I-can-problem-solve" program to teach
young children how to resolve everyday conflicts
and get along with others

by Myrna B. Shure with Theresa Foy Digeronimo
Paperback, $14.95

Reviewed by Peter Leue

When I was asked to review this workbook by my mother, I was not sure if it was because of my headstrong, somewhat overly assertive but always lovingly demonstrative five-year-old daughter. In fact, the article Mary included with the book clinched the deal in my head and that was "The Spirited Child" by Kathleen Sheets in *Homeschooling Magazine* (July-August 1996). In that article Ms. Sheets describes with loving and positive terms her seven-and-a half-year-old daughter as a strong-willed, challenging, stubborn, perceptive child.

Annie, my youngest of three spirited children (Oliver,13, and Katie,21), fits most of her definition. In that light and seeing that all my children have seemed to flourish among all the occasional barrages of difficult situations public school throws at them, I approached Annie to see if she would like to work with me in the workbook. She was excited and eager to work with dad and it turned into a routine that we set aside regularly.

The workbook puts parent (in the larger sense of the word i.e. dad, mom, grandparents, etc.) and child through a series of activities, both theoretical and real, which create a dialogue about feelings and alternative behaviors which would be more productive. The workbook was designed to sensitize children from the ages of four to seven to the feelings and needs of others as well as their own. It is also designed to assist parents in fostering problem-solving skills in their children. At the same time the workbook fosters and promotes a parenting style which is much more productive than the traditional scolding for "improper"or "bad" behaviors.

The authors recommend spending five to ten minutes a day on activities leading to twenty or thirty minutes later on depending on the child's level of interest. Because our time was at the end of the day, I found that I had to limit Annie's time as she would "work" long past bedtime. She turned the coloring activities into art projects with a surprising complexity of colors which were used to denote different feelings.

I was also impressed with her ability to imagine many alternatives to the behaviors illustrated and what their outcomes might be. The book, however, also required me to examine my own tendency to try to exterminate behaviors by using the knee-jerk parenting technique of yelling and intimidation.

What I didn't care for was the constant jargonizing throughout the book of the ICPS (I can problem solve) family. I thought that it was far over-used and by the twenty or thirtieth time I had to read it, I became offended that they didn't think that I would get it.

I'm not sure that the workbook itself has had an effect on Annie's behavior. She still competes with her eight year older brother and she still is his annoying little sister but I am sure that she is aware of alternatives when she chooses to exercise them. I am also sure that she will turn out well adjusted, confident and above all assertive not because of the workbook but because she is a spirited child.

WONDERFUL WAYS TO LOVE A TEEN ...
EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE
by Judy Ford
Conari Press
2550 Ninth Street, Suite 101
Berkeley, CA 94710 $9.95 paperback

Reviewed by Ellen Becker

This book is six by six inches square in size with a brightly decorated cover that looks, misleadingly, like the contents might be frothy or insubstantial. However, there is nothing frothy or insubstantial about the advice offered in its pages. It is a small but serious book about how to stay in good contact with your growing teenage child, written by a woman, Judy Ford, who has been working as a therapist for 20 years.

In her introduction, she immediately addresses a serious problem—the myth (and she calls it that) that young people in their teenage years are impossible to live with. She says people can believe this so much that they begin to act as if it were the truth, and it is not. She says that this negative stereotype of our young people, if believed, can eat away at our collective spirit and leave the adult generation "pessimistic, cynical and ineffective." It is the core of her belief that "if relating to your teenager is impossible, it's because you don't have the tools. Once you gain the tools, a relationship with a teenager is no more difficult than any other relationship. For the truth is that the teenage stage of life is no more difficult than any other stage of life; it just takes new skills." (And this is not to say that the job of learning these skills won't stretch you to the limit and teach more about yourself than you really cared to know, she says). Judy Ford aims, in this book, to teach parents the relationship skills they need.

The book is divided in three major sections entitled "Serenity, Spirit and Security." Within each section is a series of two-page, separately titled, pieces of advice about some aspect of relating to your growing teenager. Some sections have disarmingly innocuous titles but are packed with a powerful wallop of advice fleshed out with anecdotes about how individual parents handled this or that problem in their household.

The "Serenity" section revolves around the theme of keeping your equilibrium in the turbulent times you and your child are going through. In a two-page portion entitled "Expect the Unexpected," she counsels that your child may act at times so mature that you both forget that he or she has many things yet to learn from you, and in learning those things, may lash out at you in frustration like a two-year-old. She has a lovely portion about how to simply be still, smile and give your son or daughter a space to open up and talk to you. And from time to time her advice is very deep, as in this portion called "Respond with an Open Heart." To quote her:

> It's a parent's responsibility to respond in the moment to what's needed, rather than react automatically from past experience or a preconceived notion. This isn't always easy and it requires a great deal of self-awareness. You need to understand your own motivations and learn to get beyond them. As one woman said to me, "I have finally realized that almost all of my anger comes from fear. So when I find myself about to blow up, I ask myself what am I afraid of. I've discovered that so much of my anger at the trivial mistakes my teens make—like forgetting to empty the dishwasher - is my own fear that they will grow up to be irresponsible adults.

In the section entitled "Spirit," she describes the care and feeding of the spirit of your teenager. There are so many little tidbits of good advice here that it is hard to pick one out as an example. The part of this section that moved me the most was her recognition of the essential spirit of a child in this stage of life. She advises parents to honor the wild, strong and free nature of their teenage child. She says that kids who are forced to be "goody-goodies" by their parents "repress and deny the dark side, the shadow that lurks in all of us, giving us depth and character and adding balance to our lives." She says that wild and crazy are not the same thing as destructive (where something else is going on) but help kids work out who they want to be. She also recognizes the lifelong importance of passion and urges parents to guide their children toward their passion. Help them identify their talents and gifts and use them diligently to be able to avoid becoming a mediocre adult trapped in a role or career choice trying to please someone other than themselves. Parents can support this process or squelch it.

Her section on "Serenity," in my view, provides the grounding, the container for the rest of the parent-teenager relationship. Here she talks about the importance of seeing your teenage child's intrinsic goodness even if things are very bad, for example, if your teenager has gotten into some kind of legal scrape. Your belief that this is only part of who your child is, can help him or her learn from mistakes and grow.

She gives a great deal of importance to dealing with conflicts in the family. There are a whole series of two-page advice portions devoted to handling anger and conflict. In one of those she advises parents that "the way a family deals with conflict is the single most important factor in keeping the family close." Ignoring conflict or trying to overpower your growing child either with physical size or bribery doesn't work well. She says there is something to be learned from every argument and the more you address the underlying conflict, the more true peace you will find.

I didn't agree with everything she said. For example, when she advises parents to carefully avoid embarrassing their teenager and lists examples of parents talking loudly in public or being impatient with a waiter, I could not go along with her. In my own view, parents need to be who they are as long as they are not putting their child down and there is much for the child to learn, albeit perhaps later in life reflecting back, from a parent who speaks up, does what they feel they need to do, even, if for a time, it embarrasses their teenage child.

However, all in all, this advice was helpful to me in seeing the transition for the child, the parent, and the parent-child relationship as the child grows beyond the harmonious years of middle childhood into the demands of learning to be a young adult. My own transition through my teenage years was a rough one and my own internal models of how to parent my children were not good. The book helps identify a parent's potential pitfalls when confronted with this transition—the urge to withdraw in frustration, the urge to retreat to lecturing or jumping in and taking over, the urge to avoid relating at all by issuing threats, punishment and authoritarian rule. Judy Ford provides a guide beyond these social stereotypical responses to a living, breathing response to your teenager. Her book is full of love for her own daughter and other people's children. It is wonderful to read.

SCREEN SMARTS, A FAMILY GUIDE TO MEDIA LITERACY
by Gloria De Gaetano and Kathleen Bander
Houghton Mifflin 1996
$12.95 (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

This book is written for the concerned parent who has already caught on to the dangers of the plug-in drug, but who hasn't yet figured out how to "separate their glassy-eyed progeny from the delights of mental downtime and the titillation of inappropriate content," to quote Dr. Jane M. Healy in the book's foreword. Researched and written by two former classroom teachers—the latter a former television production specialist as well—*Screen Smarts, A Family Guide to Media Literacy* is literally a primer for something the authors call "media literacy."

In other words, they argue that, like it or not, visual media are increasingly going to dominate the lives of coming generations; and thus they do not advocate unplugging. Instead, they make quite a case for the alternative defense of helping kids (and parents) to monitor their own usage habits and reactions, thereby regaining and retaining control over this pervasive modern medium. With our help kids can, they claim, learn to recognize stereotypical characters, race and gender bias, and the manipulations of the advertising industry.

Both authors were driven to this project by their independent and shocking discoveries of how much time their young charges were spending in front of video screens of one kind or another and how powerful were the effects. They experienced firsthand the statistic that a television is on in the average American home for seven hours a day. And like all good teachers, they decided to ride the horse in the direction it was going anyway and try to turn the predicament into a lesson. The end result is *Screen Smarts*, which is most decidedly a how-to book.

Each chapter is replete with lesson plans and prefab questions aimed at getting viewers—child and adult—to actively relate to what they are watching. If you follow their instructions for analyzing the content, format and style of the programs you're watching, TV watching can truly become an active rather than a passive shared family activity. It reminds me a bit of the rebellious seventies when a group of us young adults would, after sharing a certain mind-altering substance, spend hours together watching TV with the sound off and have the time of our lives. We called that particular apartment "the TV Commune," and looking back I guess it was a classroom of sorts where we learned a great deal about the culture of which we were products.

In any event, *Screen Smarts* is a very thorough treatment of the subject. There are suggestions on how to deal with screen violence, advertising, talk shows, and sports and news programming. An appendix at the end even contains sample letters for kids to use to write to television personalities and producers so that they can communicate their likes and dislikes and hopefully develop a greater consumer impact on the medium that is unlikely to ever go away.

RAISING CHILDREN IN A SOCIALLY TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

by James Garbarino
Published by Jossey Bass
San Francisco, CA 1995
(199 pages, hardcover)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Following in the footsteps of his Cornell University mentor, Urie Bronfenbrenner, whose *Two Worlds of Childhood* was to child psychology in the sixties what Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was to the emerging environmental movement in that same period, James Garbarino presents us with a sweeping look at the deepening levels of danger facing current and future generations of American children.

Indeed the book contains numerous references to the parallel crisis threatening the earth's physical environment, particularly the concept of toxicity. Garbarino warns that just as children are far more vulnerable to toxic substances like lead and dirty air, they are also more vulnerable to what he calls "socially toxic" influences like violence, poverty, family disruption, manipulative sexuality, and the list goes on and on. And just as lead can slowly and invisibly accumulate in a child's internal organs until they begin to cause potentially irreversible damage, social risk factors like child abuse and neglect, environmental and emotional stress, or just an overall lack of support on a multiplicity of levels—physical, emotional and spiritual—are presently accumulating to the point where they are stunting the development of millions of children. All in the richest and most powerful nation on earth.

Though a career academic, Garbarino writes in a style that is friendly and personal. Rather than inundate the reader with ivory tower social theory and an avalanche of artificially gathered data, he inserts just enough hard statistical information to get our attention and raise an appropriate level of alarm. And like Rachel Carson's classic warning, this is not a book for the discouragement prone. The author points out that the problems facing today's kids are multiple, interrelated and worsening at an ever-increasing pace. All the major social indicators relating to childhood and adolescence are going down and not up.

Yet Garbarino's mission is not to spread despair, but rather to sow seeds of hope. Each chapter ends with the question, "What can we do?" and reinforces his belief that there are things that each and every one of us *can* do to increase a child's chances of growing up sane and whole. Each contains recommendations which address both the individual and the public policy level. I found these sections at times simplistic; but given the large chunk of symptoms Garbarino has chosen to bite off, it certainly would have taken a much larger book than most publishers are willing to pay for these days (and most readers to read) to detail solutions to the causes of all of the problems he examines. Furthermore, some of the most important things to be done are simple, like reserving the time to meet a child—your own or someone else's—on his or her own terms and model for them self-respect, joy, competence or creativity. To quote the author:

> We must pay more attention to what children are seeing, hearing and feeling about the world. Children are like sponges; they soak up what is around them and then release it when squeezed. We must work together as parents, citizens and professionals to protect childhood, and thus children. Be cautious and conservative about exposing children to the nastiness of the world. Let them play freely. Let them take childhood at a child's pace. Parents and teachers should be the guardians of childhood and should band together to shield the children in their care from premature adolescence—in clothing, language, television and social activities. Keep the dark side of adult life within the adult circle as much as possible. Risk accumulates, so we must do all that we can to spare children what we can so that they can deal with what we cannot.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND HUMAN LEARNING:
THE MORAL FAILURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
IN AMERICA AND JAPAN
Edited by Dayle M. Bethel
Published by Caddo Gap Press
San Francisco, 1994
$17.95 (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Here is a particularly interesting and unusual collection of essays combining the views on alternative education of two very different cultures, American and Japanese. And Dayle Bethel, a frequent contributor to *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, was just the right person to put it together. As a professor of education and Dean of the Kyoto Learning Center at the International University in Kyoto, Japan, Dayle has literally had a foot in both worlds for many years.

Furthermore, he is, as he calls himself, a holistic educator by his very nature, and therefore he is both a theorist and a practitioner of the ideas covered in *Compulsory Education and Human Learning*.

The book is an outgrowth of an international alternative education conference hosted by Bethel in Kyoto in 1990. The theme of that conference was "Educating for Moral Integrity and Human Values." Alternative school people from across the Pacific rim and the United States gathered to exchange models and perspectives, and a subsequent gathering was held in Hawaii in 1993. According to Ron Miller, founder of the *Holistic Education Review* and author of *What Are Schools For?*, in his introduction, both meetings represented "a growing awareness, in many parts of the world, that the modern 'factory model' of compulsory schooling, with its rows of passive students, its graded competition, and its reductionist curriculum, is becoming irrelevant and obsolete."

The hope was that the multicultural conferences and the ensuing book would help to spark a global educational revolution. It does indeed make for a powerful statement to have alternative education representatives from the world's two foremost economic superpowers, both locked in a continual struggle for monetary supremacy, coming together to affirm their shared belief that children's minds shall no longer be considered, as Miller so aptly puts it, "ammunition for economic warfare."

The book is also testimony to the birth of a true alternative education movement in the land of the rising sun. There, a growing chorus of voices is urging an end to the crushingly competitive Japanese educational system. Beginning with the "school refusers" of the 1980s, led by Global Human Bridge founder Kazuhiro Kojima—himself one of the first Japanese children to simply refuse to attend school and then institutionalized for his defiance—there are new options cropping up all over the country. According to Kojima in a conversation with me last spring, government repression of alternative education is finally coming to an end in the form of new laws which support the creation of non-mainstream experiments. One of the final essays in *Compulsory Education and Human Learning* is a fascinating interview with Kojima in which he discusses the purpose and the day to day operations of his groundbreaking center for children in Takasago City, Japan.

While there is a diversity of perspectives expressed in the thirteen essays, common to all is the call for more organic, decentralized, democratic and person-centered ways of teaching and learning, whether it be in school or at home. Perhaps it was the editor himself, in his essay entitled, "Renewing Educational

Structures: Imperative for the 1990s," who best summed up the spirit of his book:

> Education, then, is a process of becoming, and being. It is a process of personal growth in integrity, beauty, goodness and love, and simultaneously, it is a process leading out from private concerns and interests to active, responsible participation as a community of persons with which one is connected and to which one owes one's very life. It is a process of giving birth to social consciousness. Given the social nature of human existence, that is what education ought to be concerned with.

Compulsory Education and Human Learning is an excellent addition to the modern literature on alternative education.

PERSPECTIVES IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Edited by Carlos A Bonilla, Ph.D. and Dale H Scott, J.D.
Published by the National University
Stockton, CA 1995 (195 pp. paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

"Has the melting pot begun to boil?" is the question which begins this ambitious research project undertaken last year by Professor Bonilla's education class at the National University in Stockton. The answer then comes in the form of a thorough and up-to-date analysis of multicultural America at the close of the twentieth century, including a history of segregation and immigration/migration and a look at the impact of race/economic/gender prejudice on modern American young people, particularly in mainstream school settings.

Perspectives in Multicultural Education was written largely for future teachers like this group of graduate student/authors, who together will be facing the challenge of a nationwide public school system in which 45% of the students will be children of color by the year 2000. The book confronts the reader with information like an informal survey taken recently at a large centralized high school in Lodi, California, where teachers reported that they spent 90% of their class time disciplining students and only 10% teaching.

The problem, our authors say, isn't children of color, but teachers who are insensitive to the needs of a classroom containing an increasingly diverse range of students, and they go on to discuss model programs in different parts of the country which enable young people to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their peers. One such program is called S.T.A.R.s (Students Talk About Race) and is beginning to catch on in a number of states.

Multiculturalism is, as the book says, a hot topic in education these days—others might call it the latest in an unending string of buzz words—and *Perspectives in Multicultural Education* makes no bones about the outright necessity of helping kids to take pride in their own and each others' cultural heritage. To demonstrate their commitment to this idea, the words "Compassion," "Love," "Freedom," "Equality," "Respect," "Democracy" and "Tolerance" form the border of the illustration on the book's cover.

My sole criticism is that the authors chose to examine these cornerstones of real education only through the lens of multiculturalism, because in so doing they run the risk of encouraging a patch job on what is just one symptom of the national disease which compulsory public education has become as we prepare to close out this century.

Nevertheless, their fresh and thorough treatment of the subject at hand, which is indeed an important issue, deserves nothing but applause. It's heartening to see graduate students of education actually accomplishing something with their time spent cloistered in college classrooms with other adults like themselves.

The following announcement is taken from Jerry Mintz's newsletter AERO:

The Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) has made final arrangements with Thélème School, in the French Pyrenees Mountains, for a three-week program for children aged 11-15, to take place from July 8th to July 28th, 1997. The total cost of the program itself is $1300, and we can arrange air and train transportation to the school from New York to France for under $700. The program is fantastic. It takes place at a boarding alternative school which we visited last April.

The activities include trips to the Mediterranean Sea, exploration of the Cathars' Castles built in the middle ages, the Dolmens (stone tables constructed before the Romans came), hot springs built by the Romans, Stone Age caves, a trip to Spain and the Dali Museum, the Tour de France, fireworks, etc. If you are interested in this or know of some students who might be, contact AERO right away at 516-621-2195, Fax 516-625-3157, or write to us at 417 Roslyn Rd, Roslyn Hts, NY 11577.

FRENCH PYRENEES SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM
July 8th to 28th, 1997

Day 1	Arrival. Settling in day.
Day 2	Going to the village and around. Home activities. Midnight hot springs.
DAY 3	Go to the Mediterranean Sea.
DAY 4	Hiking in the Pyrenees. Bird watching. Animal tracking. Overnight stay.
DAY 5	Hiking in the Pyrenees. Izard watching. Stayover night.
DAY 6	Hiking in the Pyrenees.
DAY 7	French National Day. Great fireworks show in Perpignan.
DAY 8	Home activities.
DAY 9	Touring around Thélème, nearby sites of interest.
Day 10	Go to the Mediterranean Sea.
Day 11	Carcassonne (medieval city). Stay overnight.
Day 12	Cathars castles. Stay overnight.
Day 13	Treasure of Rennes le Chateau.
Day 14	Home activities.
Day 15	Nature Reserve.
Day 16	The Tour de France (the world famous bike race in the Pyrenees, an extraordinary show !). We spend the day on a good spot in the mountain.
Day 17	Home activities.

Day 18	Spain. Dali museum. Stay overnight.
Day 19	Empuries Roman Ruins (close to the beach) and the town of Girona with its Jewish inner city.
Day 20	Home activities. Leaving party.
Day 21	Leave.

THE STAFF are teachers and founders of Thélème School, an alternative boarding school with democratic teaching process which has been operating for ten years. The students will live in rooms at the boarding school. The school has its own bus for transportation, and a cooking staff which can meet the needs of the student with vegetarian or non-vegetarian meals.

HOME ACTIVITIES: handicraft, theater (Americans will prepare a sketch in French and French will do one in English), astronomy, sports, the Journal (report of our activities to be printed at the end of the stay), visits of villages and sites of interest.

WE NEED TO KNOW:

*What their diet is, vegetarian or not, any special needs; any medicine they have to take, if any.

*We need a parent's permission slip for any medical emergency.

*They should bring good walking shoes, sleeping bag, one set of warm clothes for the mountain and light clothes for most of the stay (it's usually pretty warm), bathing suit, their camera.

Following is a description of the medieval castles:

LAND OF CATHARS, A NATURAL WORLD GLORIFIED BY ITS HISTORY..

An essential stage of our visit to France: the land of the Cathars. Like eagles' nests, its chateaux are set amidst wild scenery, their walls attached to rocky spurs; the spirit of the Cathars is still alive! The chateaux of Peyrepeteuse, Puyvert, Queribus, Arques, Lastour, Montségur, Minerve, Villerouge-Termenes and Foix, city of counts, with its treasures. The route of the troubadours, the great inventors of the French language, traces the history of the Cathars...

Do not miss Carcassonne, the largest fortress in Europe with its triple surrounding wall. The effect is magical: time seems to have stood still in the strata of stone which reveal so many eras.

Contact AERO if you are interested in this program at 800 769-4171.

An Open Letter to Our Colleagues in the Consciousness Movement

Dear Friends,

, During the past twenty years, there has been a significant awakening of interest in spirituality, personal growth, holistic health, ecological consciousness, and new paradigms in fields ranging from physics to psychology to organizational leadership. These developments represent a constructive and inspiring response to the crisis of modern society, and we hope that, through the good work that so many of you are doing, their influence will continue to spread.

Nevertheless, we believe that an essential aspect of this emerging culture has been seriously neglected, and we feel called to bring this issue to your attention. It seems to us that in the consciousness/holistic health movement, a great deal of energy and effort are directed toward healing the childhood traumas and psychic wounds of adults, while surprisingly little is being done to understand and nourish the developmental needs of children while they are still young. We believe that an emphasis on adult growth is too little, too late, to bring about the truly effective healing that our culture and our planet so desperately need.

While we work so hard to heal the "inner child," our society as a whole provides pitifully meager resources for nurturing the healthy development of actual children. Drawing attention to the needs and conditions of natural human development should be a primary emphasis of the emerging "new paradigm" culture. As Joseph Chilton Pearce has so passionately pointed out in his writings, most children in our culture are prevented from experiencing their wholeness. Instead of providing nourishing environments for their growth, we offer them television, popular entertainment and shopping malls.

In becoming more aware of, and responsive to, young people's natural rhythms of learning and growth, we will truly begin to recognize the inherent wisdom of human development. Modern social institutions and ideologies are so destructive because they are rooted in profound ignorance of this organic wisdom. Rather than treating children as extensions of ourselves and our ideals, we must recognize that the seeds of human evolution lie within the soul of the child and must be carefully nourished in order to unfold according to their destiny. This sensitivity must begin at conception and continue throughout the twenty-three years of childhood. Birthing, childrearing and education must no longer be seen as methods for inculcating the prejudices of the adult culture, but as spiritual disciplines through which we uncover the deepest sources of our humanity. This is what the Quaker teacher/author Parker Palmer meant when he wrote that "authentic adults" are "persons whose lives are built around caring for new life."

The consciousness movement must begin to address, in a far more serious and sustained way than it has so far, the need for holistic, life-affirming ways of conceiving, teaching and learning.

The modern institution of schooling does violence to virtually every facet of natural human development, and it is time to challenge the corporate and ideological interests who dominate the media with their demands for even greater standardization, competition, and political accountability in education. It is not enough to put recycling or nutrition or peace education into the school curriculum; we must rediscover holistic ways of bringing young people into relationship with adults, society, culture and the natural world. As James Moffett recently proposed in *The Universal Schoolhouse*, we need to replace the present institution of schooling with networks and resource centers for learning that involve young people in the life of the larger community. We need to provide meaningful rites of passage that support the moral and spiritual development of young people. *The transformation of the way we relate to children should be a major goal of the consciousness movement, receiving far more concern than it does in the pages of our various magazines or in the workshop offerings of our growth and retreat centers.*

The renewal of family life should also be a vital concern for all those working toward a holistic, ecological society. Wise parenting—that is, parenting sensitively attuned to the natural developmental unfolding of children—would certainly eliminate the need for a great deal of therapy and "inner child" healing in the next generation. But parenting today is squeezed by economic pressures, competition for career success, and a desire for personal growth and fulfillment which, in our celebration of holistic health and spiritual practice, we too often forget to examine. Family issues should not be limited to the pages of a few specialized magazines, the homeschooling literature or the religious right; they are integrally related to issues of holistic health and spiritual growth and should be so recognized.

We, the undersigned, are concerned that the consciousness movement may be directing its efforts too much toward the results, the symptoms, of a dysfunctional society, when we need to be addressing root causes. It is seductively easy, in this culture, to become preoccupied with our individual problems and our own personal pain, rather than confronting the larger social and cultural dimensions of the modern crisis. The systemic, cultural neglect of children's spiritual development should be examined as a major source of this crisis. What does our society teach children through television, movies, popular music and its obsession with competitive sports? What are we saying about the dignity or sanctity of human life when our government has unlimited funds for military uses while leaving a quarter of the nation's young people in poverty? Specifically, how does the consciousness movement respond to these social and cultural violations of our wholeness? We believe that its response, so far, is inadequate. Like the still dominant "old paradigm" culture, the consciousness movement devotes few resources to parenting and education. Conferences and publications rarely address these topics.

Growth centers and new age marketing are big business, while alternative schools struggle to survive. An often narcissistic concern for personal health, prosperity, sexuality and spiritual growth is rarely matched by a serious interest in the unfolding consciousness of children and the ways this is deformed by our consumerist culture. If young people continue to be deprived of developmental nourishment, we will only produce another generation of alienated, addicted, rootless individuals at war with each other and with the natural world. But if we were to honor the child's inherent wisdom, we would serve Life from generation to generation.

We propose, therefore:

(1) That every conference have at least one main presenter and several workshops centering on conscious relationship to children, from conception on.

(2) That every magazine of the consciousness movement have regular feature articles and a column on children and families.

(3) That every environmental, spiritual, and humanistic organization make a deliberate effort to ground their preferred concerns and issues in a meaningful recognition of the conditions required for the natural unfolding of human consciousness in children; in other words, their work should be "built around caring for new life." Otherwise, these concerns run the danger of being narcissistic or merely ideological.

In *The Absorbent Mind* Maria Montessori wrote, "The child is the spiritual builder of humankind, and obstacles to his free development are the stones in the wall by which the soul of humanity has become imprisoned." Let us work together to break down this prison.

Signers:

Laura Huxley—Founder: Our Ultimate Investment, Author: *The Child of Your Dreams and This Timeless Moment*.

Jack Kornfield—Founder: Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Author of numerous books on meditation, psychotherapist.

John Robbins—Author: *Diet for a New America*, Founder: Earth Safe Foundation

Sam Keen—Author: *Fire in the Belly*, Leader in the Men's Movement.

Brother David Stendhal-Rast—Spiritual Teacher in Residence at Esalen, Author of many excellent spiritual books, Benedictine Monk.

Shelly Kessler—Former Director of "The Mysteries Program, Collaborator for "The Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning", Author of numerous articles on Rites of Passage and Empowering Teens.

Jack Zimmerman—Founder: Ojai Educational Institute. Founder: The Mysteries Program.

Ron Miller—Historian of Holistic Education, Founder: *Holistic Education Review* and the Resource Center for Redesigning Education, Author: *What Are Schools For* and *New Directions in Education*.

Nick Herzmark—Psychotherapist, Teacher of psychology and meditation, Philosopher.

Robert Kastelic—Professor of Education, psychotherapist, Supervisor of secondary school teachers and programs.

M. Lucy Kastelic—Montessori teacher, Director of Joyful Child Foundation, Teacher in secondary schools.

Sambhava and Josette Luvmour—Founders: PathFinder Learning Center, Authors, *Natural Learning Rhythms, Everyone Wins*, family counselors.

For more information, and to network to presenters of consciousness work on children, family and education:

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e-mail: pathfinder@oro.net

Here's my editorial comment from* Challenging the Giant, volume III. *See John Potter's response in the "Special Readers' Section" starting on page xxiv:

During the Middle Ages, because of the prevailing value system of feudalism, direct information about the world became unavailable to most people of substance except what they could find by reading Aristotle. If you wanted to know how many teeth a horse had, it wouldn't occur to you to go to a farm and look inside a horse's mouth, you would go to Aristotle! Myths about anything beyond one's immediate surroundings were the norm, and tales about unicorns, "green men"—all sorts of fantasies—were accepted as reality.

We Americans have always prided ourselves on our pragmatism, particularly in contrast with Europeans. Our schools were thought to be the cornerstone of that grounding in empirical reality. Well, something has changed in the last decade or so and I believe we need to take another look! It strikes me that as a society, we are becoming more and more dependent on myths—in this case, the myths dispensed by the media rather than the Classics. It's as though we've lost our anchoring, commonsensical instincts. Children no longer listen to what is being taught in our schools, because it's all gotten lost in the mists of our mythologies. We've gone adrift.

These are parlous times! Perhaps transitional periods always are—particularly millennial ones. Be that as it may, life goes on and we struggle to make sense of our lives, to do the best we can. For this purpose we need a lot of support from many divergent sources. It becomes harder and harder to decipher information, to sift the good myths from more destructive ones, unless you have some pretty good empirical evidence to fall back on. That's what this volume endeavors to offer. Actually, we are told that we are one of the very few sources of information about schools of many sorts that comes from direct experience—right from "the horse's mouth," as it were, that are available to families with kids.

Thousands of very good people, good families, are agonizing over decisions about their children's education. The stakes seem very high, especially in a time when the cost of living rises steadily. Questions mount. Will these children lose out? If they stay in public school, will they suffer lifelong consequences? If we make the wrong choice, will they blame us? How can we be sure we know best what they need? What happens if we let them quit regular school and do something self-chosen, like an alternative school or be schooled at home without external compulsions laid on their backs? What will they be like when they are grown? Will they fall back into the poverty classes, unwanted by the corporate or the professional world? Or will they simply "turn on, tune in, drop out"?

Something new has been loosed into people's lives. Daily life used to be pretty-well prescribed at every age by our compulsory institutional expectations and the laws that were created to back them up. But failures built into these systems which were allegedly for misfits only are now affecting more and more families adversely, and choices have to be made concerning how best to deal with these issues amidst a thicket of dangerous possible consequences. Why is this? Something has happened to change the nature of what we used to think of as our support systems. They have become managerial, intrusive into our lives. The "revolution of rising expectations" has rendered them not only obsolete but actually damaging to too many parents and children! We're no longer dazzled and intimidated by the wizard. The "little man behind the curtain" we weren't supposed to notice is out in the open, frantically twirling dials and hoping we won't see him!

Our social institutions which have borne the overall responsibility for the lives of people have become, as John Taylor Gatto says, solely concerned with their own survival, and have forgotten the purpose for which they were originally established. This has happened, in my opinion, because we do not teach democracy—peer-level selfhood, or self-regulation—choose your own term for this process—to our children—and so when they become parents, they do not pass on a capacity for real democracy to their children through their personal examples. The failure to address the underlying problems gets passed on from generation to generation.

Having abandoned our own initial purpose as a democratic nation with "liberty and justice for all" has created a pattern of extremes between the very rich and the very poor which is utterly shameful for such a rich country! We have all invested ourselves in believing in the potentiality of a cultural/economic system of unchecked industrialism—"free enterprise"—the belief that "the business of America is business." Following our national birth in the American Revolution, we set about to create a culture based on a belief in freedom of personal aspiration leading to universal prosperity. It was the American Dream, and has been our national myth.

We believed in the gradual evolution of a society with no classes, with prosperity and good fortune shared equally by all who are willing to work for it, only the lazy, the morally unfit or the stupid being deprived of this general well-being. Universal education was considered by all to be the means whereby this goal was to be achieved. That myth has gone sour, has developed into a kind of institutional cold-heartedness that is downright *un-American*! And still, the myth dies hard, even though its headlong pursuit is destroying many of our planetary resources, overrunning the earth with far more people than it can sustain, and damaging our climate and our habitat in lethal ways!

We Americans bear a tremendous responsibility for promoting this way of life among the pre-industrial countries as a solution to difficulties, supplanting their simple way of life with its focus on survival by work with our quick-fix, instant gratification through easy and mock-heroic but illegal or morally infantile patterns for acquiring money to play the game with, as promoted by so many stories on TV or in the movies.

Our initially American style of "entertaining" children and immature adults is now world-wide, along with the much-admired Coca-Cola/McDonald's syndrome for addicting people to a belief in instant gratification. We have taught the nations of the earth to drive out or destroy their own native cultures in exactly the same manner as we have destroyed our own Native American, Black, immigrant and underclass cultures.

The hidden destructiveness of our culture is the best-kept "secret" we have—and its hiding place is right out in the open, which is the best way ever devised for hiding something! By our method of acquainting ourselves with the fact of its existence while withholding the living reality of its destructive effects on thousands of people, we desensitize our people. We either ring the changes on it as drama (via the media) and then cut away to some advertisement—or turn it into statistical data to be memorized from a textbook—punctuated by the bell that ends the class—to be later regurgitated on a test. In either case, the end result is a discontinuity of one's ability to think concretely and effectively. This way, it is possible to know and not know—simultaneously!

The task of creating a new and truly supportive culture is neither an easy nor a rapidly achieved goal. It will take more than one generation to accomplish, as John Taylor Gatto has warned us. We need to begin taking it on seriously as our main task in life. Hey, it's not such a bad way to spend one's life. I can personally recommend it highly! Maybe you can start by reading what other people have been doing and thinking.

JUST FOR FUN:

OK, OK, I've been holding out on you! Didn't mean to, but I did. But I promise, p-r-o-m-i-s-e, I won't do it any more! Hey, I know not all of you are plugged in to the euphemistic NET ... yet. And I'll BET no one has told you what you REALLY get for your monthly fee. Well, that's why I'm here! To tell you! To let you in on the secret! It's a JOKE network! It's the only thing worth it, except for general schmoozing (known as e-mail), which is great!

OK, so here is a sample. And I promise to put at least one batch in every (adult) ΣΚΟΛΕ from now on. Scout's honor (girl scouts, that is). This one's from my daughter Ellen's e-mail joke network (I call it the Leue Jokenet):

THE TOP TEN REASONS TRICK-OR-TREATING IS BETTER THAN SEX

10. Guaranteed to get at least a little something in the sack.
9. If you get tired, wait 10 minutes and go at it again.
8. The uglier you look, the easier it is to get some.
7. You don't have to compliment the person who gave you candy.
6. Person you're with doesn't fantasize you're someone else.
5. 40 years from now, you'll still enjoy candy.
4. If you wear a Bill Clinton mask, no one thinks you're kinky.
3. Doesn't matter if kids hear you moaning and groaning.
2. Less guilt the next morning, and, the #1 reason trick or treating is better than sex
1. IF YOU DON'T GET WHAT YOU WANT, YOU CAN ALWAYS GO NEXT DOOR!!

This one's from Em Pariser's network:

There were three engineers drinking beer and the first one said, "God must have been a mechanical engineer. Look at how all the arms and legs work with the leverages and angles, sockets and joints. The muscles for force etc etc.. He must have been a mechanical engineer!!"

The second one says, "No way, God must have been an electrical engineer. Look at how the brain works sending all those small impulses to all the body parts, every movement the body makes works on electrical charges. He must have been an electrical engineer!!"

The third one was a civil engineer. He said they were both wrong. "God must have been a civil engineer, because who else could design a sewage disposal system right through a recreational area!!!!"

This one really breaks me up!

WORST ANALOGIES

(taken from high school papers)

She caught your eye like one of those pointy hook latches that used to dangle from screen doors and would fly up whenever you banged the door open again. (R.M., Fairfax Station)

The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't. (R.B., Springfield)

McBride fell 12 stories, hitting the pavement like a Hefty Bag filled with vegetable soup. (P.S., Silver Spring)

From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and "Jeopardy" comes on at 7 pm instead of 7:30.
(R.A., Washington)

Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze.
(C.S., Woodbridge)

Her eyes were like two brown circles with big black dots in the center. (R.B., Springfield)

Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever. (Unknown)

He was as tall as a six-foot-three-inch tree. (J.B., Chevy Chase)

The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease. (G.H., Silver Spring)

Her date was pleasant enough, but she knew that if her life was a movie, this guy would be buried in the credits as something like "Second Tall Man." (R.B., Springfield)

Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 pm traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 pm at a speed of 35 mph.
(J.H., Arlington)

The politician was gone but unnoticed, like the period after the Dr. on a Dr. Pepper can. (W.G., Madison, Ala.)

They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan's teeth. (P.K., Syracuse)

John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who had also never met. (R.B., Springfield)

The thunder was ominous-sounding, much like the sound of a thin sheet of metal being shaken backstage during the storm scene in a play. (B.F., Alexandria)

His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free. (C.S., Woodbridge)

The red brick wall was the color of a brick-red Crayola crayon. (Unknown)

In this issue

[illegible]
[illegible] at the [illegible]
Alex [illegible] the [illegible]

From John [illegible] new book [illegible]
Chapter [illegible]

[illegible] teaching [illegible] Canada
[illegible] school in deep trouble

[illegible] seven different schools

[illegible] Writing at the edge of the world

Michael [illegible]: Breaking the cycle of violence

[illegible]

Bill [illegible]: "So are you a teacher, or what?"

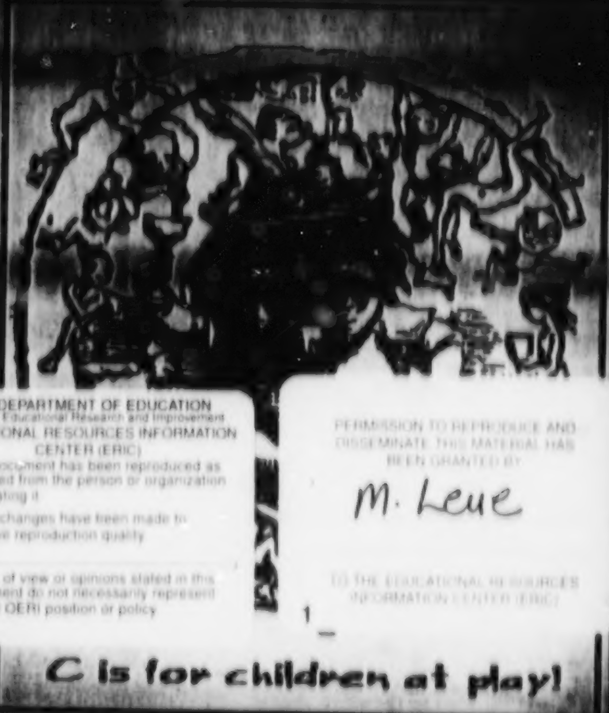
[illegible] eight pages of readers' communications

Reviews of [illegible] books worth knowing about

AND a lot more

[illegible]

[illegible]



C is for children at play!

Spring, 1997 Volume XIV No. [illegible]

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ΣΚΟΛΕ
the Journal of Alternative Education

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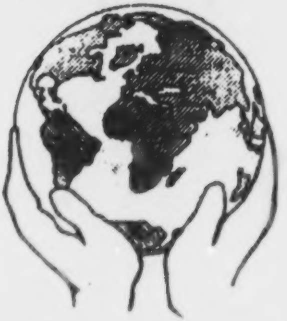
A Memorial Tribute to Danaan Parry:



the Earthstewards logo

A Paul Beeson Peace Award Recipient, a former nuclear engineer at the Lawrence Liverrnore Labs, Danaan's personal transformation from a nuclear weapons researcher to the leader of the Earthstewards Network is a story of one man's efforts to follow his heart and search for his spirit. In so doing, Danaan has enriched the lives of thousands of people, and enabled them to proceed on their own journeys of transformation.

After leaving the Lawrence Liverrnore Labs, Danaan studied psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. Realizing that concerted efforts by large numbers of people were needed to address obstacles to world peace and global survival, in 1980 Danaan founded the Earthstewards Network in Bainbridge Island, Washington, a worldwide network of individuals committed to doing their part to preserve the earth and assure human survival, stating,

> When we are at peace within our own hearts we shall be at peace with everyone and with our Mother the Earth. When we recognize that our planet itself is a living organism co-evolving with humankind we shall become worthy of stewardship. When we experience our oneness—our total connectedness with all beings—we shall be at peace with our own hearts.

As an early proponent of citizen diplomacy, Danaan sponsored many pioneering Soviet/American exchange projects. The Earthstewards Network also organized the highly successful exchanges of American Vietnam Vets and Soviet Afghan Vets, helping to heal the wounds of the Cold War between the two former adversaries. Conflict resolution has been a major focus of Danaan's. He led groups to Northern Ireland, and helped Catholic and Protestant families reclaim land in a free-fire zone to establish a farm where they worked together to grow vegetables on their new common ground. In the Middle East the Earthstewards Network organized a humanitarian and trust-rebuilding trip to the Red Crescent Society assisting with the tremendous burden they had shouldered during the war.

The Earthstewards Network's "Peace Trees" projects bring youth from all over the world to plant trees, and in the process, learn leadership skills and lessons in intercultural cooperation. Peace trees have been planted in India, the Middle East, Central America, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. The most recent Peace Trees project, the 20th, has involved creating a program to remove land mines left from the war in Vietnam and rejuvenating the land by replanting the trees which had been destroyed as a legacy of that war. To quote Danaan, "... removing death from the earth and replacing it with life."

Remembrances may be sent to: The Danaan Parry Memorial Peace Fund c/o The Earthstewards Network, P.O. Box 10697, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Well, I'm in struggle once again. I had thought it only right that this journal belong half to the kids themselves who, like the workers on the factory floor or the migrant workers who pick the apples or the beans, are the ones who know most about actual working conditions—in this case, actual classrooms—and should thus be fully represented in these pages. And yet, I didn't really want to mandate their subjects!

Actually, I still feel that way, but my sense of honesty is finally kicking in with the reality-level observation that the necessity to "speak truth to power" is too urgent to abandon fifty percent of our publishing time to unfocused expressiveness! Also, kids choose for themselves what they do and do not want to do in the way of "going public." So I am reluctantly cutting down the "Kids' Issues" to one-quarter. The summer issue (or possibly the fall issue if the volume of material begging to be published becomes too urgent!) will be that one kids' issue.

This issue is brim-full. First comes the memorial to Danaan Parry, a truly extraordinary human being. Danaan's unexpectedly sudden death from a massive heart attack was a great shock and sorrow to his many followers, including his beloved wife Jeralyn. We had had several connections with his "Earthstewards" over the years, and, more recently, had done two workshops in their "Essential Peacemaking" gender-relations conflict-resolution workshops, a description of the genesis and philosophy of which appeared in the winter, 1994 issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, pp. 127-32. Also, notices of several of his Peace Trees gatherings have appeared in several issues of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* over the years. He will be greatly missed.

Following this dedication comes the Special Readers' Section, which offers Jerry Mintz's survey of AERO readers' choices of significant issues for education and the remainder of the questionnaire responses we had received.

In the main body of the text of this issue, we have so many treasures that I've been torn on where to place them! We decided to open with a reprint of a stunningly powerful interview with Ivan Illich brought in by Chris Mercogliano shortly before we went to press, under circumstances he explains in his introduction. This is indeed a rare event, and we are immensely grateful to David Cayley and to Ivan Illich for this opportunity.

Then comes a very poignant contribution from a perceptive graduate student Kathy McLinn and her mentor Robert Kastelic: "Like China in the Bull Shop; Classroom Accidents Waiting to Happen." This is an (all too rare) true tale about the damage which is so often inflicted in the classroom, a needed corrective to the "bull" so many people take for truth in our school system—written by a classroom teacher! Its grassroots nature, and the fully human receptivity toward his former student's commonsensical outburst by professional educator Bob Kastelic, who has written us a number of good articles for *ΣΚΟΛΕ*—gave it preference for second place, EVEN over two splendid pieces left from the winter issue: the second half of Chapter Fourteen of my dearly beloved John Gatto's new book, *The Empty Child* and the reflections of our new friend and child advocate Richard Lewis! Their contributions, which follow, are enhanced, I believe, by this "Paine"-fully real context. Thanks to you all for enriching these pages!

* * * * *

Jerry Mintz has been conducting a survey of AERO subscriber families, teachers and students via e-mail of what issues they believe are most important in regard to education. The result of the survey is, I believe, quite significant, reflecting as it does, so many qualities and concerns of the people who responded.

I know he would be very pleased to have additional responses from **ΣΚΟΛΕ** ***readers! I personally would love to receive answers to any of the questions anyone felt like taking on, and would print them in*** **ΣΚΟΛΕ*****, and also make sure Jerry received a copy.***

VITAL QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES TO PONDER:

Jerry Mintz's AERO survey

Dear Alternative Educators [*and other equally concerned people, ed.*]:

Following this note are the survey questions which were suggested by our readers. Please indicate the NUMBERS of the questions which you feel are most important and send them to us at jmintz@acl.nyit.edu

There is no limit to the total numbers you may submit. We will compile the results and let you know which ones have garnered the most. We will then discuss some of these and try to find some solutions. Our intern suggests that you also use them as a basis for discussion in your school and homeschool meetings.

—Jerry Mintz, Alternative Education Resource Organization, HTTP://www.speakeasy.org/~aero

STUDENTS:

1. How do you create a diverse student body?

2. How do you help students learn how to use freedom?

3. How should schools deal with gender domination of schools, or of groups within schools, lack of mixed genders within groups?

4. What about schools not having enough students or enough students within an age group?

5. How do we find out how to better work with giftedness, both in school and in homeschooling?

6. How do you counter the culture which tells kids they aren't really in school when they go to a free school? What to do with kids who don't appreciate or understand or respect the process which they are in?

7. How do we find resources within the school's philosophy for helping students with special educational problems and learning disabilities?

8. How do we walk the line between being nurturing and holding kids to standards in their work?

PARENTS:

9. How do you get parents involved, get them to volunteer to do work for the school?

10. How do we prevent problems with a school becoming "co-opted" by gradually more affluent, more conservative parents?

11. How do you overcome the insecurity felt by homeschool parents—"can I really do this?"

12. How does a school deal with parental anxiety, the need for parent education?

13. How does a parent deal with lack of family support, community support for homeschooling or alternative schools?

TEACHERS:

14. How do we train teachers within our schools?

15. How does a school hold on to staff with low salaries?

16. What programs are there to educate teachers in democratic process and alternative education?

17. How do staff inspire academic achievement within an alternative school process?

18. What can we do about teachers who forget the school is for students?

19. How do we deal effectively with staff conflict when the school is supposed to be a supportive wonderful place to be, and nobody wants to disrupt that image?

FINANCES:

20. How can we use fundraising and financial problems as a means of building unity?

21. How do we find grants and funding sources other than tuition?

22. What are the advantages and disadvantages of proprietary or for-profit schools and non-profits with a board? How many schools are profit and how many are non-profit?

23. Is there any history of successfully merging businesses and schools?

DEMOCRACY:

24. Why is true democracy so hard to accept?

25. How can democratic education be introduced into public systems?

26. How big should a democratic school be?

27. Have alternative schools successfully tried to create a consensus process as opposed to pure democracy?

PHILOSOPHY:

28. Why do schools not regularly reexamine their basic principles? Why is there a lack of openness to questioning the way they operate without dogmatic responses?

29. How do we avoid schools becoming institutionalized in order to survive?

30. How to deal with the feeling that learning must be painful?

31. How far should you go to attract students to the school, even if the parents don't understand or agree with the philosophy?

32. How can the school pioneers transmit their ideas and approaches to younger leaders?

33. Why do we as a culture hate adolescents so much?

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

34. How do we convince the public that alternative schools are good for the so called "A" students and not just for the "at-risk" students?

35. How to deal with the public school corruption of the meaning of "alternative school?"

36. How do we convince big organizations like Peterson's that there can be more types of schools than college prep and special needs (their only two categories at this point)?

INTERNAL POLITICS AND POLICY:

37. How do you keep energy for a school after the founders leave?

38. How do you create a learning community in a school?

39. What can we do about conflicts within alternative education associations and groups?

40. How do you fight your way through bureaucracies to create freedom for students?

41. How do you deal with the prejudice that public choice and at-risk schools and private alternatives have against each other?

LEGAL ISSUES:

42. How do you deal with fire and health inspectors?

43. To what extent should a school prepare for legal problems? What kind of liability insurance should they get? What activities should be absolutely avoided?

44. How should a school deal with legal charges and lawsuits, for example, charges of sex abuse and harassment, discrimination, injuries?

RESPONSES TO *ΣΚΟΛΕ* QUESTIONNAIRE:

In the winter issue we printed your answers to question 1 of our questionnaire. By now you'll have had a chance to read them over. If you feel inspired to add yours, I'd be delighted!

Question 6 had to do with the cost of subscriptions, offering a reduced rate in cases of need. I don't think the answers I got back would have general interest for readers, relevant as they are to me!

A great many of your answers to questions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, on the other hand, although primarily very pertinent to me, address some issues that may be equally pertinent to you, I believe—so, here they are:

2. **Will you write me an article?**

3. **Do you see any relevance for *ΣΚΟΛΕ* in bringing innovative ideas to the attention of involved, enlightened people? What would help make *ΣΚΟΛΕ* more relevant, in your opinion?**

4. **How much of *ΣΚΟΛΕ* interests you? What do you particularly like? How much of it do you actually read?**

5. **Does anything about *ΣΚΟΛΕ* turn you off?**

7. **Any other comments you'd like to make?**

John Potter "2" from Kobe, Japan:

2. I would love to write you another article. It will have to wait until next year, though, as I'm amazingly busy at the moment.

[See John's fascinating articles on English and Japanese schooling in the light of his own experiences with democratic education at Summerhill and in Japan which have appeared in *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, beginning with the Summer, 1993, issue: "Homer Lane and Self-government," pp. 45-57; in Summer, 1994, we reprinted John's letter of support for a new Japanese free school—Kinokuni Children's Village, sent to the *Japan Times* in response to a published news item (written by a Westerner!) sharply critical of the infant free school, pp. 28-32; in Winter, 1995, his stunningly revelatory article, "Japan's Education: Time for a Change," appeared on pp. 16-38; and his insightful article chronicling his experiences in a class on democratic education which he taught at a Japanese University which appeared in the Summer, 1996, issue: "Education in a Japanese University," pp. 29-52.

These contributions also appear in one or another of the three volumes of *Challenging the Giant*.

3. I think you're already doing a good job. If you broaden things even more and try to get more contributions from different writers/educators it would be good.

4. As I'm British and live in Japan, I'm less interested in specific topics on American issues than the rest of you, I suppose. However, I do read *all* of the journal.

5. Can't think of anything.

7. Only to say I may not always agree with you but we're still on the same side in trying to put children first and change things for the better!

Kirsten Holmquist/Sutherland from Chicago:

3. You said at the Live-out; Founders don't necessarily have the time or inclination to be writers. You could go to them, interview parents, kids, teachers and founders.

4. I love the histories, the tales of conferences and "sketch of a school" kind of thing. I wish some of the non-writer schools (people from the Modern School Movement) were represented better.

5. Is there any way to get graduates of the schools to write about their experiences at school?

7. Dr. James Garbarino from the Erikson Institute (Chicago) is now at Cornell. He has interesting ideas about children [see review of his book, *Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment*, pp. 99-100 of the winter issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*] .

Unknown name (for which I apologize and mourn all over again!):

2. I could do one on our school's combination of group education and homeschooling and/or about our high schoolers' working equal time for their tuition.

Peter Burns writes from Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont:

3. Yes—and soon.

4. I do see relevance but would like to see a broader range of sources (i.e., alternative schools, learning centers and homeschoolers). *ΣΚΟΛΕ* is billed as a journal of alternative education and to really BE that I think it must include more than the free schools' experience.

5. Again, I'd like to see more articles by more different people in more different places doing more different stuff. I like the idea of choosing a topic and soliciting articles from readers.

7.. Yes. In an article written by [*the blank is Peter's]* who was a student teacher at the free school; he mentioned that there were no colleges, universities in this country that taught alternative/progressive teaching. I'd just like to offer that Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, not only offers such a program for on-campus students but also offers an off-campus non-residential program including certification for both graduate and undergraduate students world-wide. In addition, each summer they host the Pitkin conference on Democracy in Education, a 2-4 week accredited intensive for students and educators alike. Interested people can contact Goddard Admissions, 1-800-468-4888, Goddard College, Route 2, Box 235, Plainfield, VT 05667-9989, for more information.

Thanks, Peter. Please write us your article! I wish you had included the name of that ignorant student teacher from "the free school" ! We'd sure fire him in a hurry! Actually, I didn't think we HAD any student teachers, but I'll look again. Maybe one snuck in when I wasn't looking.

From Michael Mann, St. Paul, Minnesota:

2. Love to, but, but, but. Might be able over long time to put together something on the constant surprise of home schooling (maybe the worry too)—but that seems huge—maybe a summer project (though last summer saw not a single summer project done).

3. Relevance:
Sure—just continue your search for aspects of alternative education. I am reading two books on Anarchist Schools—*No*

Master High Or Low, by John Sholton, and *The Modern School Movement*, by Paul Avrich, at ten pages or so every few days. I am always eager to find out what has been tried. (P.S., I was at the home school booth at the Minnesota State Fair in August—I think 3 or 4 four-hour shifts—and I brought along *ΣΚΟΛΕ*. Most wanted basic information or were combative, but a few were delighted with *ΣΚΟΛΕ*.

Note: I wrote Michael begging him for a review of Sholton's book, and got this reply:

> You asked about a review of *No Master High Or Low*. It would be fun to do. And I am now reading it more carefully (pencil in hand). I will aim to get something done by the end of the year (if you have a deadline, please let me know). BUT I also know how my good intentions often get buried on this desk of mine that I see only once, some weeks. SO, I am happy to try and if that is OK with you, I will let you know.
>
> Thanks again for your kind words. Seems I see mostly those with doubts and frowns when I talk over home schooling, or my thoughts on education.

4. Last issue—of interest:

Interview: hard to think with—don't understand your excitement—yet he has done much "work" (I probably should look at his work more) —but I found him simplistic; (scary to say such a thing about such a major).

Gatto: always a trip;

Alternative school conference: interesting, though the tone was a bit nasty;

Japanese education: very interesting;

Massurin: very interesting;

—and I discovered that I never read your article—but a mere oversight, I assure you, Tonight in the tub, maybe.

—and other pieces too—in short, I liked it (but I must admit, looking over past issues, there is much I seem to have put off until tomorrow—but that is not for lack of interest. This letter, for example, has been interrupted probably ten times—and I thought this would be the quick letter tonight.

From Olivia Loria, Pine, Colorado (whose answers came too late to be included in the winter issue):

1. **Are you still concerned about educational issues in general?...Do you still have hope alternative education can bring about reform?**

Yes, Mary. Yes, or at least help those young people who are in alternative ed.

2. I keep intending to, just never have the time to do it.

3. Yes.

4. Often, in the past, haven't had time to read it thoroughly. Hope to have more time in the future.

7. Keep up the good work!

Friends, I have to say a bit about Olivia, a woman of many talents! President Emeritus of NCACS, for many years Head of her school, Pinewood, and now entering on a joint venture with Pat Montgomery as a new member of Pat's Clonlara Homeschooling Network! Good luck to you both, Olivia, Pat!

Robert Davidson, from Killingworth, Connecticut:

3. No. Total change of philosophy. See below.

4. Not much.

5. Yes. 1) Almost all feelgood stuff. 2) Wholly unrealistic. 3) Impressionable.

7. Instead of printing stuff from frauds like Gatto, you should be retrieving some of the great work done by Vygotsky, John Dewey, Elliott Wigginton, Betty Edwards—the great thinkers about alternative schooling and school reform.

PS. Robert didn't renew. Surprise! Who's Betty Edwards?

Em Pariser, Camden, Maine:

2. I think I'd like to write something with Eben [*Em's son*] on his program this year. We are doing a half-day apprenticeship, a half day school.

3. *ΣΚΟΛΕ* is great because it is open and lets relevance take care of itself.

4. How much? Usually there are two articles in each issue which interest me. I always like knowing what John G. is thinking about—he's fun to argue with and learn from.

5. Sometimes it feels like we "preach to the choir," but that's OK ultimately.

7. I always appreciate the whole-hearted spirit with which you do this. It always reminds me of the Bread and Puppet approach to art. It's encouraging and inspiring. Please give everyone a hug for me!

Allen Parker, from Cambridge, Massachusetts:

2. Not yet. Maybe eventually when I complete my book on integrating technology, society and spirituality.

3. It is relevant to my interest in integrating technology, society and spirituality.

4. I only read an article or two per issue.

Britta Fairfield, from San Rafael, California:

2. Eventually I would like to send you an article.

3. I love it just the way it is.

4. I enjoy reading about projects children get done—working on it together in school, and the stories and poems written by children.

Dorothy Werner, from Chicago, Illinois:

4. As much as I can read—time is nuts!

7. Think of you often—hard to read or write while driving—which I do lots of. Good for thinking, though!

Diana Sottile, from Mill Valley, California:

4. I read it cover to cover, most issues. I skim the kids' issue--. More interested in the adults' experiences as those serve to support my growth and others', as role models.. Somehow it isn't really reader-friendly. I mean, I don't feel invited to dive in. Visually, the type needs to broken up somehow. But content is interesting.

5. The typos and grammar errors bug me a little.

6. I'd like to hear from children more, and a variety of voices, maybe pictures too? Needs more life!

And here's one response about the cost of subscription which *I'm printing anonymously to avoid violating my reader's privacy. I include it as an encouragement to other readers who are struggling with finances. I'd better repeat the question first:*

6. Does the cost of a subscription get in your way? Would receiving a complimentary sub allow you to keep on subscribing? Obviously, if you can manage it, you will be helping keep ΣΚΟΛΕ alive, but don't stop subscribing just because you can't afford it. Let me know!

I am in the middle of getting my materials together needed to start a school. A lot of them are expensive Montessori materials—they last a long time, but I can only afford to buy them over a period of time so my budget is very limited right now. I am making ends meet through tutoring. I really appreciate your being so patient with me and for not taking me off your list. I would like to take you up on your offer just once. I am sure my finances will be in better shape a year from now.

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An Interview With Ivan Illich

by David Bayley,

edited by Chris Mercogliano

Editor's note:

This brilliant interview, from which I have excerpted only the portions directly related to education, was conducted by David Cayley in September, 1988 for the CBC Radio program, "Ideas." My thanks to both Cayley and Ivan Illich for their generous permission to rework the original material as I saw fit.

It was actually my request to interview Illich for *ΣΚΟΛΕ*—which he refused on the grounds of a life-long distaste for interviews and his failing health—along with my asking Illich for comment on the manuscript for my upcoming book, *Making It Up As We Go Along: the Story of the (Albany) Free School,* which resulted in an invitation last October to meet with the man who has had such a profound influence on my own ideas on education for the past twenty-odd years.

I arrived in State College, Pennsylvania, on a glorious Indian Summer afternoon. Ivan Illich greeted me warmly with a generous smile and a great, bony hug. Without hesitation, his right-hand man and companion of thirty years, Professor Lee Hoinacki (quite a story in himself), invited me into the small international circle of men and women who gather around Illich when he teaches at Penn State University each fall.

Although he's presently suffering through the final stages of a slow-growing cancer on the right side of his otherwise beautifully aging face—an illness doctors predicted he would succumb to over ten years ago—Illich continues to teach, both formally and informally, seven days a week. He remains an intense bundle of intellectual energy in spite of the physical pain which is at times quite apparent. Illich is a teacher in the most classical sense of the word: he loves his subject and his students with equal fervor.

Once I recovered from the shock of seeing up close the enormous tumor disfiguring his jawline, what impressed me immediately about Illich was the ecstatic look of an almost boyish delight which overtakes his expression as he shares his latest ideas. At seventy, he has largely left behind the work of analyzing contemporary cultural patterns of thought and perception, which occupied him throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s, in order to develop what he calls a philosophy of history.

Over a long weekend at the university, I had the privilege of sitting in on both a classroom lecture and the much less structured weekend sessions in his office. Arriving from Albany just in time for the end of one of his weekly Friday afternoon "wrap-up" seminars, I was practically bowled over in the doorway by both the heat and the energy emanating from that crowded room, one from which the participants seemed in no hurry to depart. The following morning I would encounter a very different atmosphere as I joined a dozen or so of Illich's closest associates sitting in a ring on the floor of his threadbare office while he led us in a wide-ranging discussion.

Meanwhile, it was in State College where I first learned of the Cayley interview. My host, a professor of economics at neighboring Bucknell University, had all of Illich's books in his personal library, including the most recent, David Cayley's *Ivan Illich In Conversation*, which I had never seen before. The book combines a very true-to-the-original transcription of Cayley's exhaustive five-day interview with Illich with an extraordinarily comprehensible sixty-page synopsis of the life's work of this incredible scholar.

Reading Cayley's book late into my first night in State College, it became clear to me almost immediately that, even with Illich's cooperation, there was no way I could ever have come close to conducting an interview with such depth and breadth. Thus what follows is my heavily edited version of the original, which I encourage everyone to obtain and read in its entirety (copies can be obtained from: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1800 Steeles Ave. West, Concord, Ontario L4K 2P3).

A note about David Cayley:

A native of Toronto, Canada, and a writer/broadcaster at CBC radio for many years, Cayley first met Ivan Illich when he traveled to Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1969 to attend his seminars on the emerging issue of so-called third world development. He has maintained an on-going relationship with Illich ever since. It is Cayley's depth of understanding of Illich both as a great thinker of the twentieth century and as a human being that enabled Cayley to translate the contents of an extremely complex mind into laymen's terms.

Excerpts from Cayley's introduction:

In 1938, when he was twelve years old, Ivan Illich walked through the vineyards on the outskirts of Vienna and smelled the fetid wind that, in a few days, would bring Hitler's troops into Austria and change his world forever. He knew then, he told me, that he would never give children to his grandfather's house. This house had stood on its island in the Adriatic off the coast of Dalmatia since the Middle Ages. It had seen rulers come and go, and empires rise and fall, but daily life had scarcely changed in the intervening centuries.

"The very same olive-wood rafters supported the roof of my grandfather's house. Water was still gathered from the same stone slabs on the roof. The wine was pressed in the same vats, the fish caught from the same kind of boat . . . For the people who lived off the main routes, history still flowed slowly, imperceptibly. Most of the environment was still in the commons. People lived in houses they had built; moved on streets that had been trampled by the feet of their animals; were autonomous in the procurement and disposal of their water; could depend on their own voices."

All this changed in 1926, the year of Illich's birth. The same ship that brought the infant to be blessed by his grandfather carried the first loudspeaker ever heard on the island. "Up to that day," Illich has written, "all men and women had spoken with more or less equally powerful voices ... Henceforth access to the microphone would determine whose voice [would] be magnified. Silence now ceased to be in the commons; it became a resource for which loudspeakers compete."

By 1938 Illich already knew in his bones that the world into which he had been born was vanishing. Soon he would become a wanderer through the uncanny landscapes generated by the loudspeaker's many progeny. But he did not lose his tap-root into the soil of old Europe or his family's ancient affiliation with the Roman Church. He took this fading world within himself where it would nourish a stance so radically traditional that for a few years in the late 1960s and early 1970s excited North American audiences thought it avant garde.

Illich discussing his origins:

CAYLEY: Where did you grow up?
ILLICH: Because I supposedly created difficulties for my mother, threatening her with my arrival, she was taken to the best doctors,

who at that moment sat in Vienna, Austria. My father was not then living in central Europe. So I was born in Vienna. Then, at the age of three months, I was exported, with my nurse, to Dalmatia to be shown to my grandfather and to be baptized, there, in Split, on Vidovdan, the Day of Great Liberation, the first of December. There I grew up, spending a part of the year in Dalmatia, a part with the other grandparent in Vienna, and a part of the year in France or wherever my parents were.

Then, during the later 1930s, my place of ordinary residence was at the house of Grandfather in Vienna—where I got stuck as a half-Aryan with diplomatic protection—which being the son of my father afforded—to shelter my Jewish grandfather, until he died a natural death there in his own house in 1941. At that time, I ceased to be a half-Aryan and became a half-Jew, according to the law. We had to more or less go underground and slip out of what was then Germany. I spent the rest of my youth, from the age of fifteen, mainly in Italy, in Florence and Rome.

C: With your parents?

I: No. My father was dead by then, and I took care of my mother and two smaller brothers, who are twins. They stayed in Florence. From 1951 on, I have been on this side of the ocean. Since I left the old house on the island in Dalmatia, I have never had a place which I called my home. I have always lived in a tent like the one in which you are sitting at this moment.

Next I was five years in New York, as a parish priest, working with Puerto Ricans on 175th Street. I was in Puerto Rico for five years, officially engaged in educational institutions. I was five years in Cuernavaca, Mexico, renting a big hotel from which we ran a modest political effort to upset volunteer programs for Latin America, from 1961 to 1966. From 1966 to 1976, I made possible this alternative university in Cuernavaca, the Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC). This center lasted exactly ten years to the day, from April first to April first. It began with a big fools' feast and ended with a dance. So that gives you my whereabouts.

C.: Your education was in Rome?

I.: It still goes on.

C.: You said you were fortunate in having only sporadic schooling.

I.: I registered for purely practical reasons in chemistry, and finished in crystallography in Florence.

C.: What was practical about that?

I.: I got legitimacy by obtaining an ID card, which provided me with a false identity, under the Fascists. It was a little useful tool. Later, I seriously studied philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University, in Rome and a doctorate in history in Salzburg.

Right after the war, I got stuck in Salzburg. I wanted a residence permit, and my lawyer advised me that the best thing would be to register at the university. So I went there in order to maintain my legitimacy, and then got fascinated with two professors, Professor Albert Auer and Professor Michel Muechlin, who became my great teachers in historical method and in the interpretation of old texts.

Illich on Education:

C.: What was the origin of *Deschooling Society*? Did you begin as a conventional believer in schooling?

I.: No, I considered that school met the needs of others. I had been brought up without much schooling. At the age of six, when my normal languages were French and Italian and German, my mother wanted to put me in a school in Vienna, a very good school where they already gave tests to children. They found that I was a retarded child. That was a great advantage for me because for two years I could sit in my grandmother's library and read her novels and look up all the interesting things that might intrigue a nasty boy of seven in the dictionaries. Yes, I went to school, but only by bits.

Practically everything I learned occurred outside of school. But I also never made an issue of schooling. So when in 1956 I suddenly found myself the vice-rector of the Catholic University in Ponce, Puerto Rico, and, a year later, a member of the government's Board of All Education, the Consejo Superior de Ensenanza, governing everything from the universities to grade schools, I couldn't but ask myself, "What is this stuff about education?" I had never really reflected on it. You met up with me when for ten years I had been trying to puzzle out what the whole thing meant.

C.: And why did you conclude that it didn't make sense?

I.: I first concluded that it was structured injustice to compel people to go to school and only then began to reflect whether it made any sense. On that road, the meeting with Everett Reimer was important for me. A good fifteen years older than I, Everett at that time—1956—was chairman of the Human Resources Planning Commission. I met him soon after I arrived at a meeting of top administrators on how to organize planning to design education. Bottles are designed. Packages for bras are designed. How to design education and how universities should collaborate in making design into a subject were the issues on that day.

Most of my life is really the result of meeting the right person at the right moment and being befriended by him. This was the case with Everett. But I was confused by his title—planning—a word I had never used before. I looked it up in dictionaries and didn't find it. It appeared for the first time in dictionaries after World War II. Human resources was another issue. How do you make human beings—these Puerto Rican *jibaritos* with whom I was dealing—human resources?

I remember on my next trip to New York going to Princeton to see Jacques Maritain, the philosopher, who was then living there. We had met up in Rome in a seminar and he had become a dear friend and advisor. His imaginative Thomism meant a lot to me. He was then an old man with a face, as Ann Freemantle once said, cut from a stained glass window in Chartres. In 1957, I was now sitting there with him again. He had a teacup in his hand and was shaking when I talked to him about the question which bothered me, that in all his philosophy I didn't find any access to the concept of planning. He asked me if this was an English word for accounting, and I told him no ... if it was for engineering, and I said no ... and then at a certain moment he said to me, "Ah! Je comprends, mon cher ami, maintenant je comprends." Now I finally understand. "C'est une nouvelle espèce du pêche de présomption." Planning is a new variety of the sin of pride.

It was along this kind of circuitous road that I came to understand what this educational system of Puerto Rico was doing. First, thanks to years of conversation with Everett, I read my way into the pragmatists and empiricists of the English tradition of thinkers and philosophers. Second, I asked myself, what do schools do when I put into parentheses their claim to educate? Perhaps only in that way will I find out what they do. They then had a machine which was called a computer. It had nothing to do with what you see around now, but could already gobble up so-called data and organize them. So I was in a position to ask for data.

When I looked at the printouts they gave me, it was quite evident that after ten years of intensive development (another one of these words!) of the school system in the country, which at that moment was, together with Israel, the showcase for development all over the world, schooling in Puerto Rico was so arranged that half the students—that half which came from the poorer families—had a one-in-three chance of finishing five years of elementary education, the amount which was compulsory.

Most of the discussion around me was about immediately making many more years of education compulsory. Nobody faced the fact that schooling served, at least in Puerto Rico, to compound the native poverty of half of the children with a new interiorized sense of guilt for not having made it. I therefore came to the conclusion that schools inevitably are a system to produce dropouts, and to produce more dropouts than successes. Because the school is open for sixteen years, eighteen years, nineteen years of schooling and never closes the door on anybody, it will always produce a few successes and a majority of failures. In the minds of the people who financed and engineered them, schools were established to increase equality. I discovered that they really acted as a lottery system in which those who didn't make it didn't just lose what they had paid in but were also stigmatized as inferior for the rest of their lives.

C.: That was what impressed me when I taught in the school system of Sarawak in East Malaysia. At that time there were no more than a handful of people who were going on to university in Moscow or at the University of British Columbia. And yet the whole country was entering the primary grades, and aspirations were being focused at least at the level of graduation from high school. So it only took a nudge from you for me to recognize that this extraordinarily steep pyramid constituted a kind of rationale for failure.

I.: Don't you think that by now you have to be a little bit benighted, silly, or high with some dreams about your society not to know these things? Then it was really a surprise for people. Today I can't surprise anybody with the evidence—which has remained the same. I think the idea that schooling leads to an education went out during the 1970s, but in the 1960s and especially in the 1950s you were really treated like a skunk, like a criminal, when you questioned this. Things have changed.

C.: But they've changed in such an odd way. In the early 1970s, when your views on schooling had a brief vogue, everyone seemed to agree with you. But fifteen years later ...

I.: Nothing has changed.

C.: Well, something presumably has changed, but it hasn't changed in the direction of deschooling.

I.: But the deschooling I meant was the disestablishment of schools. I never wanted to do away with schools. I simply said, "We live under the American constitution—I spoke to Americans —and in the American constitution you have developed the concept of the disestablishment of churches. You disestablish by not paying public monies. I called for a disestablishment of schools in that sense. I suggested that instead of financing schools, you should go a little bit further than you went with religion and have schools pay taxes so that schooling would become a luxury object and be recognized as such. In that way discrimination because of lack of schooling would be at least legally discontinued in the same way that discrimination because of race or sex has been made illegal.

C.: In asking for disestablishment and by using the language that was used historically to separate church and state, you imply that schooling has in effect become a new form of compulsory religion.

I.: Perhaps I have to explain how I got to my analysis of schooling. I told you what led me into it practically: I was responsible for making or presiding over very serious decisions and the creation of legislation touching the education of Puerto Rico. So I had to reflect, What am I doing? And it seemed to me quite clear that I was acting within a context that seemed ridiculously similar to a religious one. So I began to speak intuitively about the disestablishment of schooling. Later on I made much more of a point of this, because I actually treated the school system as a continuation of the Christian church system in Western culture.

When, under the influence of Everett Reimer, I began to engage in a phenomenology of schooling, I first asked myself, "What am I studying?" Quite definitely, I was not studying what other people told me this was, namely, the most practical arrangement for imparting education, or for creating equality, because I saw that most of the people were stupefied by this procedure, were actually told that they couldn't learn on their own and became disabled and crippled.

Secondly, I had the evidence that it promoted a new kind of self-inflicted injustice. So I said to myself, Let me define as schooling the compulsory attendance in groups of no more than fifty and no less than fifteen, of age-specific cohorts of young people around one person called a teacher, who has more schooling than they. And then I asked myself, What kind of a liturgy is used there to generate the belief that this is a social enterprise that has some kind of autonomy from the law?

C.: And?

I.: I came to the conclusion that this was a mythopoetic ritual. Gluckman, who was my hero at that time, says that rituals are forms of behavior that make those who participate in them blind to the discrepancy which exists between the purpose for which you perform the rain dance, and the actual social consequences the rain dance has. If the rain dance doesn't work, you can blame yourself for having danced it wrongly.

Schooling, I increasingly came to see, is the ritual of a society committed to progress and development. It creates certain myths which are a requirement for a consumer society. For instance, it makes you believe that learning can be sliced up into pieces and quantified, or that learning is something for which you need a process within which you acquire it. And in this process you are the consumer and somebody else the organizer, and you collaborate in producing the thing which you consume and interiorize. This is all basic for being a modern man and living in the absurdities of the modern world.

C.: These were your observations of schools in the 1960s. Would this have been true of schools a hundred years before, or was this a new phenomenon?

I.: It would be easier for me to go a little bit further back. Recently, I supervised somebody doing an interesting thesis on about 120 Pietists in Germany who wrote diaries in the later seventeenth century. Now this person observed that these Pietists who wrote the diaries were very simple people, and began to study how many months they had attended a village school--which was certainly before the little red schoolhouse. It turned out that with three exceptions, these 120 had learned all they got from school in less then eleven months of attendance. They didn't go to school to get an education. They went to school to learn how to hold the pen. I can talk in the same way about the Middle Ages. The idea that you go to school to get an education develops very slowly. I always said it begins with Comenius, who says that everybody must be taught everything perfectly so that he doesn't pick it up badly outside of school.

The idea that competence in the world derives from being instructed about it, taught about it, is an idea which from the seventeenth century on slowly takes over. In fact, the social effects of schooling which I spoke about became possible in Puerto Rico only with the idea of universal compulsory schooling. I've nothing against schools! I'm against compulsory schooling. Schools that are freely accessible allow the organization of certain specific learning tasks which a person might propose to himself. Schools, when they are compulsory—as we see at this moment in the United States—create a dazed population, a "learned" population, a mentally pretentious population, such as we have never seen before. The last fifty years of intensive improvement of schooling—here, or in Germany, or in France—have created television consumers.

We live in a strange society in which people believe that they act on empirical evidence. But the empirical evidence, in relation to schooling, is quite obvious and not only with respect to justice. Since that excellent book by Ivar Berg, *The Great Training Robbery,* which was given to me by Paul Goodman, many similar studies have been done. Berg shows you that there is absolutely no connection between the subjects people have learned in school and the effectiveness of those people in jobs requiring preparation in those subjects. There is a very close connection between how much money has been spent on a person's schooling and the total lifelong income which he'll get on the job, but no provable relationship between the competence he is supposed to have acquired in school and his effectiveness on the job.

C.: So schooling is a form of capital investment in which the return is proportional to the investment, regardless of competence.

I.: Yes. Nobody doubts that. It's capital investment, but it's also social control, it's grading, it's the creation of a class society consisting of sixteen levels of fewer and fewer dropouts. But these are things that then interested me. I somehow have the impression that, even though not much has changed in the general commitment of our society to schooling, there are thousands of people around who see clearly, with truly wise and cynical eyes, what the institution does. Today, I would be interested in completely different questions.

C.: When you wrote about this in 1970, you suggested that things would have to change, and when they did, they would change quickly.

I.: I was wrong. At least in the time frame, I was wrong. I did not believe that so many people could be so tolerant of nonsense. Now that I'm back in the United States after twenty-five years and again have to do with student populations, I sometimes am so sad in the evening that I have difficulty falling asleep. The college and university systems have become like television. There's a bit of this and a bit of that and some compulsory program with its components connected in a way that only a planner could understand. It creates students who have gotten utterly used to the fact that what they learn they must be taught, and nothing they are taught must really be taken seriously.

The first person who told me I was wrong and would be proven wrong was Wolfgang Sachs. He was a student of mine. In Germany, I met with him and a small group of other students, then in their mid-twenties, who criticized the articles collected in *Deschooling Society*. They claimed that by making so much of the unwanted side-effects of compulsory schooling, I had become blind to the fact that the educational function was already emigrating from the schools and that, increasingly, other forms of compulsory learning would be instituted in modern society.

It would become compulsory, not by law, but by other tricks like making people believe that they are learning something from TV or compelling people to attend in-service training, or getting people to pay huge amounts of money in order to be taught how to prepare better for intercourse, how to be more sensitive, how to know more about the vitamins which they need, how to play games, and so on. They made me understand that my criticism of schooling in *Deschooling Society* might have helped people like yourself to reflect but that I was barking up the wrong tree and that I should ask myself: How can we better understand the fact that societies get addicted—as to a drug—to education?

Then, during the 1970s, most of my thinking and reflection centered on the question, "How should I distinguish the acquisition of education from the fact that people have always known many things, have had many competencies and, therefore, have learned something?" So I then came to define education as learning under the assumption of scarcity, learning under the assumption that the means for acquiring something called knowledge are scarce. At this point my reflections were no longer rabble-rousing and nobody on campus discussed them. Years later, I see only a little ripple of response here and there.

From there I was led to my project since the mid-1970s of writing a history of the perception of scarcity. I asked the question, "Which are the conditions under which the very idea of education can arise?" You can't have the modern idea of education if you don't believe there is knowledge—knowledge which can be packaged, knowledge which can be defined, knowledge which constitutes a value which can be appropriated. I therefore became concerned with the mental frame or space within which the concepts by which we construct the notion of education can take shape.

C.: You remark in *Limits to Medicine* that, if your critique of medicine is taken as an attack on doctors, the result will be analogous to what has already happened in the matter of schooling. Were you saying that because your attack was understood to be on schools, this actually helped the school to reconsolidate itself as a sort of universal schoolroom?

I.: Correct.

C.: And this is what you feel you didn't see at the time you published *Deschooling Society?*

I.: I did not see it when I wrote the article called "The Futility of Schooling in Latin America," which the *Saturday Review* published. Three years later, six articles of mine were put together in that book, *Deschooling Society*. The book was nine months at Harper's, because it takes nine months for a good book to go through its gestation period. During the last month, the prepublication month, I suddenly realized the unwanted side-effects the publication of my book could have. So I went to the editor of *Saturday Review*, Norman Cousins, a friend of my neighbor and friend Erich Fromm, and said, "Norman, would you kindly allow me to publish an article during the next month?"

"Yes," he answered, "but only if you write it in such a way that we can make it the lead article." So I wrote an article in which I basically said that nothing would be worse than to believe that I consider schools the only technique for creating and establishing and anchoring in souls the myth of education. There are many other ways by which we can make the world into a universal classroom. And Cousins was so kind as to allow me to publish what I consider the main criticism of my book.

C.: There have been many criticisms of *Deschooling*. I remember one by Herb Gintis, in the *Harvard Educational Review*, which I think typified a Marxist critique of your work. Gintis says that you have made schooling a matter of an initiation into the myth of unending consumption, but you have overlooked the way it is a mirror of the productive system. You have made people responsible for their own deschooling when in fact they are behaving rationally and appropriately within the system as a whole, and therefore you're giving them a counsel of despair. Because, he says, unless they can transform the system, it's impossible for them to deschool, since the school is intrinsic to the system. That's a very rough paraphrase.

I.: To Mr. Gintis I would have said, "You are worried because the poorer part of Americans—at that time, the blacks and Puerto Ricans in the ghettos—don't get enough schooling to know what's good for them and so remain independent. Poor people drop out of school before they can fall into your hands and be told that you know what's good for them." But I had literally hundreds of critics. John Ohliger collected three volumes of citations of these criticisms and discussions. And in all that stuff there was no attention to the only two chapters I wanted to have discussed, "The Ritualization of Progress" and "The Rebirth of Epimethean Man."

C.: In your book, *Gender*, you say that you could not have written either that book or *Deschooling Society* without the work of Philippe Aries.

I.: It is through Aries that I was introduced to the historicity of the notion of "the child," and that in this sense it is a modern construct. I probably fell for Aries because I had always disliked it when the children of my friends would take the attitude "I'm a child and you must pay attention to me." Since I was fifteen, I had refused to notice or to enter into any kind of intercourse with such a person. Some of my friends, better friends, family friends, have considered me all my life a brute. But an interesting thing has happened a number of times. When these kids had difficulties with their parents, they suddenly appeared on my doorstep—at age fourteen or fifteen. In two cases, they came to another continent, seeking refuge. My intuition is that one of the most evil things our modern society does is produce children in this specifically modern sense. As a young man, I decided that I wouldn't do that. That was the reason I decided at age twelve not to marry.

C.: To stay with childhood for a moment—does identifying it as a specifically modern idea invalidate it? Is it not also in some sense an advance?

I.: It's just that with all advances, the greater they are, the more they are an extreme form of privilege. We are sitting here and having this conversation together because I was, at one glance, so impressed by the feeling between you and your children, whom you have kept out of school. Now for them, the fact that you have abandoned the idea of childhood in order to take these kids who live in a world of childhood fully seriously as kids is an extraordinary advantage. But this is not a model. This is something to be emulated, not imitated. It's the spark of uniqueness that must be cherished.

A week-long gathering we call the

Berkshire Live-out –

coming, Sunday, July 26 through Saturday, August 2!

We are a growing group of people of very diversified origin who have come to believe that our national educational problems are not very likely to be resolved in the near future—perhaps not even in our generation—a sad commentary on our country's capacity for problem-solving, but probably true! We've chosen to approach educational problem-solving on a human, relational level, believing that real learning comes out of an atmosphere of enjoyment by families and community that fosters the joy of discovery! And because we love gathering with each other every summer!

This is the fourth summer in a row that we will have gathered, from as far away as California, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Maine and as near as the nearby village of Ashfield, coming together in this old farmhouse built in 1796, to talk together about problems, share ideas for support, make plans for change, clarify issues, listen to each other's experiences, eat, play, swim, walk in the woods, play in the brooks, visit the local attractions, make friends, learn—about ourselves and each other, about kids, about how schools manage, about what helps, about how others have dealt with the problems that have floored us—about whatever concerns people come with.

Sometimes educational leaders join us: John Taylor Gatto, Pat Farenga, Jerry Mintz, Jon Scott, Ron Miller, Sandy Hurst, Kate Kerman—and we hope for participation by their likes this coming summer as well! But in the long run, these issues will be addressed and finally laid to rest when families decide the time has come for change that benefits all children, not just a few! And that means you and me.

We keep costs very low so as not to exclude anyone, and even the low costs we do have can be set aside if money is a crucial issue for anyone! This is not about money! So—give us a call (518-432-1578), and we'll put you on the mailing list for a notice when the time gets close.

Love from the Live-out family—from Albany, New York who host the Live-out at Journey's End, in Ashfield, Mass., and points north, south, east and west.

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Like China In The Bull Shop: Classroom Accidents Waiting to Happen and Downshifting into Boredom.

by Robert L. Kastelic, Ed. D. and Kathleen McLinn, MA.

Dear Mary,

Enclosed is an article co-written with Kathy McLinn, a former high school student and then a former University student teacher of mine. Kathy came back and asked to learn how to teach, with me as her mentor. It's a frustrating experience. It's even more frustrating when you are on your own in the classroom and have some good ideas to employ with the students and the students sit there, victims and casualties of a non- caring system. We have put together an article in which we have taken a common metaphor, "Like a bull in a china shop," and applied a revised meaning to it.

"Like China in a Bull Shop. Classroom Accidents Waiting to Happen," investigates the confusion and the frustrations of students and teachers in the schooling system. Downshifting is a process that we have all experienced in the classroom. However, the problem is avoidable with application of the proper amount of caring . What to do ?

Regards, Bob
Dr. Robert L. Kastelic
Director of Research and Development
Southwest Research 3rd Educational Services, Inc.

Schools are places of change. By their very nature, schools are constantly promoting the need and the value of change. Teachers are in a continual conversation with students on the process and advantages of change. "Learn this and be sure to get that," teachers advise. "Answer this and, oh yes, have you ever thought of doing it like this?", they ask. "Read for content and analyze," teachers say. "Com'on, let's be creative and generate some new ideas," many state without hesitation. Advice spills out like waterfalls with the rhetoric of change in the classrooms. It's a continual flow of reasons for, and expectations of, change. Many of these students' proverbial glasses are filled up with information and ideas and we just keep pouring more stuff into these already overflowing curriculum glasses.

Throughout this entire delivery process we seem to think that the students are getting it all. Yet, as many educators realize, nothing could be further from the truth. School hallways are littered with student casualties. In an effort to survive the compulsory contract many students slip themselves into playing the schooling game with themselves and others. Just getting by and the manipulation of the system becomes the order of the day for too many students. Melt down is near.

But many of these problems and concerns are not limited to the role of the students alone. Many teachers are at the brink of melt down too. Even parents frustrated with the system and a variety of other things are reaching a perplexed state. So, we are all engaged in looking to change various areas of the educational system in an effort to save this dying patient. Measures such as cooperative learning, site-based management, whole language reading programs, whole brain learning, Quality schools, revised discipline programs, TQM, and the 'this and that' program, etc. etc.; the list goes on ad infinitum. Many who are in education have shut down to the possibility of implementing such programs merely from frustration. Its not that all of these programs are not of value or are important, they are. Many of them have been preceded with vast quantities of research and solid findings. Take, for example, the research and work of Howard Gardner [1983] with regards to learning and multiple intelligences. It began a wave of rethinking the traditional curriculum.

Of course, now Gardner [1995] is having to further clarify his work because of the many who have misunderstood the research and the findings promoted by Gardner and others. There are many others as well. A brief sampling would include, but not be limited to, the following, Robert Sternberg [1985] on promoting differences regarding intelligence; William Glasser, MD. [1990, 1993] in the area of Quality Schools and employing behaviors in schools that provide for students and teachers to get their basic needs met; Ted Sizer [1984] promoting ideas surrounding the usage of time and space in schools and of more is less, if done in an appropriate manner. Many of these ideas are still not being implemented in the mainstream classrooms.

In some cases there has been far too little concern and awareness on the part of all of the learning community to begin the process of meaningful change in the classroom.

Consider too, the long-standing work of John Goodlad [1984] and his work on the benefits of smaller schools and schools within schools concepts and Johnson and Johnson [1987, 1989] and their contributions to the work of cooperative learning. While many embraced the concept as worthy in the classroom, too many did not actually embrace the value of cooperation in their personal or professional associations with actual school policy-makers.

The list of innovative program models is long. All of the aforementioned program models and many others, have made significant contributions to the advancements of future quality education programs. But in stepping back and in reflection one might ask, how much of these are actually taking root in learning environments across the nation? What kind of personal or professional commitment can be developed with five year plans that come every three years whether needed or not? Are educators and their students suffering from the effects of superficial changes in the classroom?

Much has been discussed and written about regarding the issue of student motivation in schools today. Some argue that it is the role of the teacher to motivate the student. Others recommend that the student learn how to motivate themselves. Intrinsic verses extrinsic motivation and the perceived value of each may be a never-ending debate. Meanwhile, as the debate looms the student sits and waits. They wait because it works for them to wait. They can't be wrong that way . They will continue to wait too because they also are having an increasingly difficult time perceiving the value of motivating themselves. They are also having an increasingly difficult time perceiving the value of being educated. They just want permission to go on to the next step. Never mind that they have not yet mastered this step, they want to go on and their parents want them to go on . Go on and get to college. Go on there too. Go on and get a job. That s what it's all about any how, isn't it? Getting a job. Being educated isn't important, if I have a job. Getting a job becomes the primary motivator of both the students and the parents. Teachers also use getting a good job as a motivator.

In an effort to combat this apathy and atrophy many educators have employed fear as a tactic of choice. Many perceive fear as being the most effective motivator. Fear about grades. Fear about failure. Fear about missing out. Fear about not getting into the college they want. Fear about disappointing their parents. Fear about not getting a job. The list is a long one. Some students even prefer fear as a motivator because they think that they at least know where they stand. Kohn [1993] has presented valid arguments as to the destructive nature of using fear and rewards as motivators.

In reality, learners come to schools as beautiful wonders. They wonder about everything. Just listen to any one of them and try to answer all of the questions they have. They wonder about birds, monsters, dinosaurs, computer games, television, each other, butterflies and their feelings. These learners are elegant and have a special richness about themselves. They are like some fine pieces of china. One might observe them and wonder in awe at the fine quality that each one of them possesses. They are like sponges willing to soak it all up. There is a sense about learners, of pureness about their presence. Then, they enter the maze of "the bull shop [school]." Many school systems make for good examples of "bull shops." Bull is presented to them in some of the most remarkable ways. Complete nonsense and lack of common sense is delivered as some sort of game that one had better believe. Games that had better be learned.

[*Editorial note: see pp. 114-7 for a review of a new and eminently readable book written by Jane Tompkins, a professor of English literature at Duke University who one day unexpectedly experienced a kind of "instant apotheosis" in her college classroom that started her on a course of recollection of the staggering level of fear from which she had habitually suffered in school—NOT in a "ghettoized" school but in an "ordinary" middle-class one! The detail of her recollection is astoundingly vivid!*

Tompkins describes her subsequent college-level teaching in the light of her awareness of the presence of a similar fear level among her own students. She tells us how she has been working to reclaim her own heritage and passing on the reward for that labor to her students, helping them to activate their own humanness, transforming into personal expressiveness those vivid recollections of the endless years they spent as children feeling so utterly intimidated or alienated by teachers—even gentle ones!—that it nipped their own inner awareness and creativity in the bud during the first three decades of their lives!]

Players in the classroom had better subscribe to the bull of the school room or be willing to accept the consequences. School starts and the bull begins and it just keeps on coming. Much of the bull is rooted in the manure of fear. Fear that things will happen and fear of the things that might happen. Fear that someone will miss something. Fear of failure. Fear that someone will be found out. Fear of not knowing the answer. Fear of going beyond the boundaries. Fear of the almighty grade and grade point average. Fear of peer pressure. And in some schools, fear of physical harm. There is a lot of fear in schools. Meanwhile, many of us can attest to the fact that fear is the greatest obstacle to learning. This is true in school, skiing, languages, and many, many other things. For example, how many times have you heard someone say that they would like to play the piano, or get a Doctorate degree but for some reason, the plan never really takes root. How many times is this lack of rooting based in fear?

Like fine china, learners come to learning environments at school with enthusiasm for discovering things. Like fine china, too many students are placed on the learning shelves to look pretty. Some schools even show off their chinaware. These sites have people from outside the school come in and look around at the students who are performing for them. Then, usually the wrong people take the credit for the placement and the beauty of this china. It's really amazing that more china doesn't get broken. Granted, there is a lot that gets chipped. And, there is the selection of china that are chipped away at day after day. Sometimes attempts are made to glue broken things back together. However, these well meaning attempts at putting broken pieces back together are usually short lasting. And, there are those in the profession that do not want to have anything to do with broken, chipped, or mended pieces of china.

What can be done in these bull shops in order for less china to be broken? We might consider rearranging the china in such a way so that one could negotiate their way through the bull system without making too much of a mess. We might also consider placing more focus on whether there is a congruence with the learning statements of schools and the process being maintained within the environment.

Then, we might also consider rethinking and reframing our conceptual understandings and philosophical grounding of the educational process. The most immediate consideration might be the philosophical foundations that each educator has. What philosophy do we as professionals subscribe to? We need to revisit the sound reasons of why we do things in the classroom. We need to reexamine how deep our educational roots are. We need to explore ways to ground ourselves in meaningful educational processes rather than, merely following the crowd or doing something because it was introduced as the new school or, district plan. We need to have some deep change. Change that is rooted in our professional and philosophical beliefs. We need to cut out the bull, the rhetoric, and the educationese. We need to work at reducing fear as a motivator in the learning place. We need to keep sites in alignment with the philosophy of the staff and the community. We need to acknowledge superficial change and work to eliminate it.

Too often program models are introduced in schools as though everyone is in agreement. We need to ask more questions of ourselves and each other. We need to reflect on the quality of our craft. We need to concern ourselves with deep change. And, if we change, the result will be a change in the system. As Thomas Paine, of *Common Sense* [1775] fame, was noted as stating, " We have it within our power to begin the world again." We have it within our power as educators to influence that change process. We, as educators, do influence change every day in the classroom. We are all at the starting line. What will be the intended direction as we negotiate our prized chinaware through the bull shop ?

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Eyeless In Gaza, Part II

by John Taylor Gatto

Chapter Fourteen, from John's forthcoming book, *The Empty Child*, soon to be published by Simon and Schuster

If you haven't already done so, I beg of you to read the first part of this brilliant essay in the Winter issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ! John is reminding us vividly how very far down the long, long road of literacy we have come to arrive at the national generational crisis of ILLITERACY we are facing. He is telling us that, all along that road it has been a matter of "The Emperor's New Clothes"—of the people who have acted as the "experts" in this field toadying to the powers that be in promoting phony descriptions of learning that enabled them to sell their brand of compulsory education to legislators and families!

If you don't have a subscription to ΣΚΟΛΕ and want the issue anyway, just give me a phone call (518-432-1578) and I'll send it to you as a free sample! Both John's article and the interview that follows with Richard Lewis are tremendously important antidotes to the "blindness" we continue to exhibit as a nation—to the evil, as defined by Hannah Arendt—of what we are doing to our precious young people!

Others besides Arendt (Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Scott Peck come to mind) have pointed out the insidiousness of evil that inheres in its very nature—its ORDINARINESS! And for it to flourish, as Burke reminds us, it only requires that GOOD MEN DO NOTHING! I need to repeat John's quotation from Arendt here:

> *I was struck by a manifest shallowness in the doer [Eichmann] that made it impossible to trace the incontestable evil of his deeds to any deeper level of roots or motives. The deeds were monstrous, but the doer...was quite ordinary, commonplace, and neither demonic nor monstrous. There was no sign in him of firm ideological convictions or of specific evil motives, and the only notable characteristic one could detect in his past behavior as well as in his behavior during the trial...was something entirely negative; it was not stupidity but thoughtlessness ....Might not the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty for thought?*
>
> *—Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind*

6. How Hard Is It To Learn To Read Well?

I know a school for kids from four to eighteen that doesn't teach anybody to read, yet everyone who goes there learns to do it—most of them very well. It is the beautiful Sudbury Valley School, twenty miles east of Boston in the old Nathaniel Bowditch "cottage" which looks suspiciously like a mansion to me: a place ringed by handsome outbuildings, a private lake, woods, and acres of magnificent grounds. Sudbury is a private school but with a tuition under $4,000 a year it's considerably cheaper than a seat in a New York City public school. At Sudbury kids teach themselves to read and they learn to do it at many different ages, even into the teen years though that's rare. When each kid is ready he or she self-instructs, if such a formal label isn't inappropriate for such a natural undertaking. During this time he is free to request as much adult assistance as he needs but that usually isn't much.

In nearly thirty years of operation Sudbury has never had a single kid who didn't learn to read, many with great sophistication aided by a magnificent school library on open shelves where books are borrowed and returned on the honor system. About sixty-five percent of Sudbury kids go on to good colleges. The place has never seen a case of dyslexia. That's not to say some kids don't reverse letters and such from time to time but only to underscore that such conditions are common, almost always temporary and self-correcting unless they are institutionalized and called a disease.

So Sudbury doesn't even teach reading yet all its kids learn to read and even to like reading. How about that?

7. Bootie Zimmer, Miracle Woman

The miracle woman who taught me to read was my mother, Francis Virginia "Bootie" Zimmer as she was known when she was a cheerleader at Monongahela High School where she graduated into the Depression in 1929. Bootie never got a college degree but nobody despaired about that because daily life went right along without too many college graduates around. When she married my father they went to live at 7541 Calumet Street in Swissvale and were, if not poor, then its closest cousin. One day in 1939 when I was four a traveling salesman came to our door and unloaded a gigantic multi-volume set of readings on Mother called

"Adventures in Storyland," on easy-payment terms I suspect she was still meeting when she died last year.

In order to justify the horrendous expense to my dad my course of reading instruction began the very next day. Mother had been reading to me and my sister since my earliest memory, at least since the age of two but armed with the huge leatherette bound volumes with marbled end papers and long selections drawn from all the world's classic literature, the experience took on a regular daily character.

Taken when John's heart was still young and gay? Trusting, even hopeful, at any rate ... when Bootie Zimmer still held sway, perhaps, at the age of fourteen.

Here was Bootie's scientific method: she would hold me in her lap and read to me while she ran her finger under the words. That was it except to read with lively expression in her voice and eyes, to answer my questions, and from time to time to give me some practice with the different letter sounds. One thing more, for a long time we would sing, "A, B, C, D, E, F, G.....H, I, J, K, LMNOP.....etc" every day. She would read the tough stories as well as the easy ones, truth is I don't think she could readily tell the difference any more than I can today. The book had some pictures but blessedly only a few so words made up the center of attention. Pictures have nothing at all to do with learning how to love reading except that too many of them will pretty much guarantee that never happens.

Over fifty years ago my mother Bootie Zimmer chose to teach me to read well. She had no degrees, no government salary, no outside encouragement, yet her private choice to make me a fluent reader was the passport to a good and adventurous life for her son. Bootie, the daughter of a Bavarian, said "Nuts!" to the Prussian system. She voted for her own right to decide. For that I will always be in her debt. She gave me a love of language and it didn't cost much. Anybody could have had the same if schooling hadn't abandoned its duty so flagrantly.

8. A Priesthood of True Believers

Thomas Jefferson said in a famous letter to Colonel Yancey in 1816, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization it expects what never was and never will be. I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control...the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion by education."

Not everyone agreed, however, that the people should be trusted. Fifty years after Jefferson said that, shortly before Darwin introduced the concept of "favored races" to the scientific world, the Anglican historian Lord Macauley predicted the eventual collapse of the American state: "It is quite plain your government will never be able to restrain *a distressed and discontented majority*, for with you the majority is the government, and has the rich who are always a minority absolutely at its mercy." By 1873, as the first promising trial balloons for an American *national* upper class were being floated, President Garfield was ready to deliver the official American rejoinder to Macauley which he did in the speech "The Future of Our Republic: Its Dangers and Its Hopes."

"This opinion of Macauley's is vulnerable," he said, "It leaves out the great counter-balancing force of universal education." Of course our education was *not* universal at the moment, our *Constitution* explicitly protected us against such a blow to liberty. But it soon would be.

The change in schools that began to be noticeable in the 1930s and produced its first crisis by 1952 did not in fact begin in the 1930s but three decades before at the turn of the century. Modern schooling as we know it—compulsory, standardized, dumbed-down, and nationalized in all but name—begins when for the first time attendance laws are widely enforced by the use of police, courts, a combination of low-grade bounty hunters (the social work surveillance and intimidation network) and through heavy use of journalistic public relations and various chautauquas driving parents to believe their children would be disadvantaged without schooling. Notice I did not say "without education"—it was during these turn-of-century years that for the first time the general public was convinced that schooling and education were the same thing. Of course they are not. No one ever believed that before.

We have no time to examine all the very complex reasons this happened at precisely that time but mass immigration was certainly the trigger event. Many groups backed compulsion-schooling for many different reasons: some wanted a work force disciplined and trained like Germany's whose industry at that time was considered state-of-the-art; some felt threatened by the terrifying changes immigration was wreaking on American cohesion and wanted the newcomers rapidly "socialized"; some thought of socialization a different way and had a revolutionary Marxist agenda to build a new social order—they looked upon schools as an easy way to do that invisibly, right under the noses of parents, churches and society; some thought schools would create employment opportunities for women, or for the declining Protestant calling of the ministry; some were genuine ideological utopians who believed with Plato and Rousseau that first you had to wipe the slate clean before you could reprogram young minds; and some just wanted everyone to be able to read, write, and count. It's important, though, to understand that this non-ideological, commonsense group didn't trust Americans in cities to continue doing what Americans in the country had been doing for hundreds of years, to grow up their own way.

For me, the most frightening and effective of the special interest groups that wanted an effective institution of mass schooling were the academic and administrative progressives who had a very specific agenda to accomplish—the creation of a scientifically layered national society and economy. These social science activists wanted a completely planned, programmed, and predictable society, perhaps as forerunner of a planetary society arranged the same way. These men and women were able to attract backing from many wealthy families.

It would be silly to think of them as conspirators (although they thought of themselves that way often enough and loved to revel in the high adolescent euphoria of what they looked upon as "the work" of building a new world order. No one who cared about such things was fooled or even, I suppose, much bothered). If you listened patiently to the public statements of the in-group, the Fabians, the Cliveden Set, the Roundtablers, the aggressive Progressives, you could determine their grand initiatives; by observing how their various projects always dovetailed into greater and greater centralizations and overarching systems, how the key personnel were interchangeable among the important foundations, how the same universities, think tanks, endowments, private clubs, and sources of finance turned up over and over, it was not at all difficult to see the players, see the gameboard, and even keep score as over the years initiatives like Bloom's *Taxonomy* became "Mastery Learning", which in its turn became "Outcomes-Based Education" which in its turn hatched "Goals 2000" and various school-to-work schemes; in other words to watch the grand design of a fully-managed, expert-driven society and economy advance itself over the years.

As I've said, there is no real connection between 20th century schooling and what went before. Modern schooling is a kind of religion; its goals are most certainly *not* reading, writing, arithmetic, and thinking, although sometimes those happen because teachers and even administrators, not realizing the kind of enterprise they are embedded in, contradict the logic of the thing. But we must be honest and say that does not happen any too often, it is dangerous for the teachers and principals who try, they are not thanked for their successes, and as we all know, swimming against the current wears you out pretty fast.

The religious purpose of modern schooling was announced clearly by the legendary University of Wisconsin sociologist Edward A. Ross in 1906 in his famous book, *Social Control*. Your librarian will be able to locate a copy for you without much trouble. In it Ed Ross wrote these words for the prominent academic and industrial eyes among his wide following:

> ...plans are underway to replace community, family, and church with propaganda, education, and mass media....the State shakes loose from Church, reaches out to

School....People are only little plastic lumps of human dough.

Before I press on, there you have it in a nutshell. The whole problem with modern schooling. It rests on a nest of false premises. People are not little plastic lumps of dough. They are not blank tablets as John Locke said they were, they are not machines as La Mettrie hoped, not vegetables as Friedrich Froebel,* inventor of kindergartens, hypothesized, not organic mechanisms as Wilhelm Wundt taught every psychology department in America at the turn of the century, nor are they repertoires of behaviors as Watson and Skinner wanted. They are not even, as the new crop of systems thinkers wants it, mystically harmonious microsystems interlocking with grand macrosystems in a dance of atomic forces.

I don't want to be crazy about this; locked in a lecture hall or a bull session there's probably no more harm in these theories than reading too many Italian sonnets all at one sitting, but each of these suppositions sprung free as a foundation for school experiments leads to frightfully oppressive practices.

People are not little plastic lumps of dough, and shaking loose from community, family, and church, as Dr. Ross of Wisconsin evangelized, has ruined a lot of lives already and promises to ruin many millions more before we can end its career. One of the ideas that "empty child" thinking led directly to was the notion that human breeding could be enhanced or retarded as plant and animal breeding was—by scientific gardeners and husbandmen. Naturally the time scale over which this was plotted to happen was quite long; nobody expected it to be like breeding fruit flies, but it was a *major* academic, governmental, and even military item publicly discussed and generously funded until Hitler's extremely proactive program following America's lead became so embarrassing in 1939 that our own discussions and projects became more discreet, even went underground, after WWII.

**John has sent us this copy, below, of a fax he had sent to* The Sun *which I believe is very pertinent to this whole issue of the radical, grass-roots democracy John is fighting to restore versus the view of society embraced by "nice" people who fear the loss of their perqs. It's a valid and a thorny issue whose resolution is still tainted by the fears of the haves versus the have-nots so poignantly battled over in the revolutions of 1789 (the French), 1848 (Europe) and 1914 (Russia)!*

But nobody who ever heard of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment or the deliberate nuclear pollution downwind of Hanford in eastern Washington which provided involuntary laboratory subjects upon whose lives could be observed the effects of radiation, or who has heard of the CIA random distribution of the Swiss Sandoz Laboratories drug LSD in America—the CIA apparently being the only distributor of LSD in the early years—should have any trouble seeing that at some point our government lost any restraint about subjecting its unwitting citizens to medical experimentation. The massive Ritalin experiment in American public schools is a more recent example of the same "little plastic lumps of dough" attitude at work.

Back at the beginning of the twentieth century, the monstrously influential Edward Thorndike of Columbia Teachers College said that school would establish the conditions for "selective breeding" "before the masses take things into their own hands." Now if you are anything like me and you hear gas like that your brain tunes out until the balloon comes back down to earth, but that is our mistake. Thorndike—who is one of the major reasons we have standardized testing at all—said that eventually the ranks and labels produced by national testing could be used as a basis to issue jobs, licenses to marry or hold office, or to have children.

Maybe it's more of a "kid" issue than we usually believe, in reflecting the freedom—or lack thereof—that upper, upper middle, lower middle, lower and under class kids sometimes enjoy, interfered with only by school! But, in any case, here's the fax:

Fax to *THE SUN* from John Taylor Gatto

I'm sorry Ann Berens took my reference to Friedrich Froebel as derogatory, I try my best to be accurate and candid but insulting the dead is neither my pleasure nor my goal. I am not surprised that the circumstances and initiatives of Froebel's life were not a central part of the curriculum of Froebel College in England, since an abstract of his "system", edited to remove the elements of Froebel which might cause eyebrows to raise, is calculated to please garden variety humanists, social critics and generally nice people (no irony intended) in general. It is no wonder that Froebel, like the equally strange Pestalozzi before him, Comenius before him, and all the Manns, Deweys, Thorndikes, Skinners et al. who followed after to tend the gardens of children we call "public school" are preserved for

The religious purpose of modern schooling was embarrassingly evident back when Ross and Thorndike were on center stage, but they were surrounded by many like-minded friends. Another major architect of standardized testing, H.H. Goddard, said in his book *Human Efficiency* (1920) that government schooling was about "the perfect organization of the hive." He said that standardized testing, listen to this, was a way to make the lower classes recognize their own inferiority. Like wearing a dunce cap. It would discourage them from breeding and having ambitions. Sort of like making them illiterate was supposed to do. You know if Goddard was just a dumb academic hack spouting some radical screed this might just be noise, but he was the head of the Psychology Department at Princeton. Try to imagine the effect he had on the minds of the doctoral candidates he coached.

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the laity in sanitized lists of good ideas (and many of them are good) to which only a meanie could take exception.

The total reality of Froebel and the rest is much much stranger than Miss Berens' abstraction. His cult and his literary personality arises in the main from a book by a Prussian baroness, Von Marenholtz-Bülow (yes, that Bülow family!) translated in 1877 by Mrs. Horace Mann (yes, that Mrs. Horace Mann), from the same Peabody family which gave J. P. Morgan his first partner and which dispatched Unitarian ministers as circuit riders through the prostrate, war-ravaged South to bring her communities into the newly conceived government school compulsion fold). Afterwards the kindergarten movement in the U.S got its saint and its gospel at the same time, while the political state, the Hegelian political state, got a powerful mechanism to divide children from their families and cultures at the same time.

Froebel grew up in a bad family in the depths of the Thuringian forests at the end of the eighteenth century. His intense, solitary rambles in the woods convinced him man and nature were governed by the same laws, that the divine nature of mankind was an illusion, the notion a barrier to enlightenment. What confuses things is that he said that "all education not based on religion is unproductive" but an examination of what he actually meant is instructive. Formal religions had to be set aside while we "honor Science in her divinity". From his observations of plants and trees he concluded not only that children grow the same way, through fixed and discernible stages, but that a graduated course of exercises prepared by experts should be used to instruct mothers in how to

We didn't leave the religious purpose of modern schooling back in the early years of the century. In April of 1996 Al Shanker of the AFT said in his *New York Times* split page that every teacher was really a priest. I don't think he was being poetic. He elaborated on the notion. And my own favorite sermon-on-the school-mount came from Dr. Shirley McCune, Senior Director of a curious entity called the "Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory." In 1989 Dr. McCune addressed the fifty governors of the United States assembled in Wichita, Kansas. Looking those fifty governors in the eye, Shirley said:

> What we're into is the total restructuring of society. What is happening in America today, in Kansas and the Great Plains, is not a chance situation. What it amounts to is a total transformation of society.

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mother. Specifically, he felt the one thing needful for mankind was unity of development.

One most powerful clue to the organizational forces working on Froebel's imagination was his absolute love and passion, even though an Austrian himself, for the Prussian army. This was no abstract affection. In 1813 he enlisted in Lutzow's corps and fought enthusiastically in the most comprehensive military schema—indeed it was a religion—ever conceived and executed. Out of the Prussian concept of the ordering of society came modern schooling including Froebel's kindergartens. The idea as it was interpreted by Prussian Minister Stein, although it was never Froebel's understanding, was that school to the age of 11 or so should be a wonderful, warm, humane place full of songs and dances, and drenched in "love," not discipline. When the power to develop an independent intellect had become thoroughly atrophied, then the screws could be put on with little fear of any sustained opposition. Froebel's extension of schooling backwards into the unclaimed territory of early childhood was considered a superb end run around family

Once again I hasten to add this was not Froebel's own conception. but like Mann, Dewey, (or Seymour Papert) after him, his scheme was child's play to coopt in the service of the state. It's no coincidence that when Froebel's own voice (not his institution) was officially banned from Prussia because his vegetable metaphor conflicted with state purposes when pressed too far, Froebel pined away and died a year later. As an appendage of the Prussian mind he could not survive his own amputation.

Who is the "we" Shirley is talking about? Is it the same "we" Dr. Ross said was replacing community, family, and church? In fairness I have to admit I'm quoting Shirley out of context, but how on earth is it possible to quote a statement like "we're into the total restructuring of society" out of context? What do you suppose the context *is*? Why don't you ask the Mid-Continent Education Laboratory for a copy of the whole text?

9. Strange Fruit

Something strange is going on in schools and has been going on for quite some time. Whatever it is does not arise from the American tradition. As closely as I can track the thing through the attitudes, practices, and stated goals of the shadowy crew who makes a good living out of skulking around "laboratories," think tanks, and foundations engineering the present destiny of fifty million children and adults, we are experiencing an attempt, successful so far, to reimpose the strong-state, strong social class attitudes of England and Germany on the U.S.—the very attitudes we

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Since in Froebel's scheme the sacred scientific undertaking of state schooling suffered from the "state of raw material brought to it" his plan was to gently remove or weaken the influence of parents, transferring it to "gardeners of children." He thought of kindergarten as "an enclosure in which young human plants are nurtured." That he would allow this nurture to follow a course dear to the hearts of "holistic" thinkers (and to some extent dear to my own) cannot change the gruesome (to me) fact that the outcome sought was a radical unitarianism. He often commented on the vital importance of kindergarten for the whole human race. That this colossal management scheme would be management by objectives rather than by fine-tuning a uniformity of techniques is scant compensation for this strategy designed to make a free society unfree in every important regard. That Froebel's purpose has been substantially achieved in the West is the curse of our time and lies at the heart of the problem of modern schooling.

I could cite abundant references to Froebel's vegetable dream but the most economical access is the entry "Froebel, Friedrich Wilhelm August" in the legendary Britannica llth edition written by the reverend Robert Hebert Quick, lecturer in education at the university of Cambridge, and an enthusiastic advocate of Froebelism in all its forms.

Another view

Editor's note: I think we owe our readers a reminder that old Froebel was hardly a favorite with the Prussian government for his advocacy of a child-friendly introduction to learning! His great grandson John Froebel-Parker has twice written of his ancestor's kindergarten in this journal: "...It was multi-cultural. It was the first school to take in Christian and Jewish children. The Kaiser banned it. Then Hitler banned it. *—(Summer, 1995, p.128)*

*—and: "He saw the child as a flower which must be cultivated in order that it might grow into its own individual and complete beauty—all under the nurturing gaze of the "*Kindergärtnerin,*"or kindergarten "teacher" whose job it was to aid and suggest, model and facilitate but never mandate or cajole. In this model all children were invited to participate, and although among his supporters were Baroness von Marenthal-Bülow and the Queen of Saxony, he insisted that youngsters from "*Krethi und Plethi,*" from the workers to the noibility, had the right to develop side by side to their highest potential.*

*"These ideas were thought too radical for the Prussian regime of the day and too easily related to Friedrich's nephew, Julius Froebel's "socialistic tendencies." Julius, ex-consul to Smyrna, had been sentenced to death in absentia after the revolutionary period of 1848 and fled to the United States, where he involved himself in German-American political movements. Thereupon was issued the infamous "*Kindergartenverbot,*" which put a crushing halt to Friedrich Froebel's dream of liberal, free and child-centered early childhood education."*

—(Winter, 1992), p. 29.

I believe we owe it to Froebel's memory to honor the historical setting of his work (as we do that of Francisco Ferrer, founder of the Modern School), rather than what it has become in our own time! His model may have been sociologically naive, but it was a tremendous improvement over what was universal at the time in Prussia. I wonder if at least part of this issue oughtn't be assigned to the insoluble problem of the socio-economic bootstrap by which it is impossible to raise onself off the ground.

I recall my own kindergarten year (in the 20s) as a little paradise, probably because I loved playing teacher's pet and was good at the paper-and-pencil we did. The school district was an almost exclusively upper-middle class! To me, this latter inequity may be even more to the point than the issue of regimentation per se*. I'm not saying John is wrong, only that most families tend to be "upward mobile," in spite of Nietzsche's* rassentiment*, when their kids are involved.*

threw off in the American Revolution—and in the reimposition, the state churches of England and Germany have been replaced by mass forced government schooling, tending to uniformity and a national nature, as our own state church.

This strange phenomenon, whatever its full nature really is, is being reflected in the economy as well and in the current efforts to tie schooling closely to future work prospects under the false auspices of protecting our competitive position in the global economy. Let me elaborate on that a little. As the U.S. prepares to enter the twenty-first century, eleven percent of all its people live in walled and gated compounds, according to Lester Thurow of MIT, rather as the Barons of Runnymede did back in 1215.

Doing well in school would not change that fraction at all for those not so housed. Thurow, hardly your garden-variety radical, says that fraction is expected to rise to twenty percent by 2005, a decade away. Think about that for a second. Think about its implications for schooling, employment, marriage, and all the rest that one-fifth of the population will live in guarded sanctuaries in less than ten years. That means eighty percent won't live that way, right?

Eighty percent is a figure that fascinates me and I want to tell you why. Back before government-forced schooling existed except as a nightmare, the Prussian government began to debate how many children should be allowed to learn how to think like policymakers, and to learn to partially command their minds like engineers, doctors, lawyers, college professors (and the like) do.

Prussia decided that six percent could be allowed to learn how to think completely or to nearly think that way. Prussia set about constructing a framework of schooling and mechanisms which would lead, ideally, to that result. A society where one out of every sixteen people could dream, plan, argue, and lead, and where fifteen out of sixteen could eat, drink, be merry, get along together and take orders.

England, being much more liberal than Prussia, and much, much, more disorganized, decided in her own bumbling fashion the Prussians were too severe, that at least eight percent could be let in on the big secret of intellectual and character development. And when British forced-schooling very tardily got under way toward the end of the 19th century, this was the goal it moved toward, in a bumbling fashion.

But in the United States where freedom, self-reliance and liberality were watchwords, neither six percent nor eight percent would do, not even in polite conversation about the matter in drawing rooms of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. As a *hypothesis*, mind you, the grand American experience with ordinary people doing extraordinary things led to a general belief that the U.S.—were it ever to get the school thing together—might allow as many as twenty percent of the population access to its own mind.

If you find this offensive, think of it as John Gatto's fairy tale, but keep the twenty percent/eighty percent figure in mind. The way to hold the unfortunate eighty percent in a mind-numbed state was to allow the best of the cohort only limited access to reading, independent work, experience of responsibility—to hold it to "problem-solving"[2] which would allow the development of intelligence without allowing intellect to form; as for the rest a more severe dumbing-down discipline would be imposed as soon as the complicated undertaking of mass schooling was cobbled together against the resistance of those who said, "Why?—we're already the most literate nation on earth."

Let me update the connection: In a book published as I write, *Fat and Mean: The Corporate Squeeze of Working Americans and the Myth of Managerial Downsizing*, David Gordon tells us

> The American economy has grown massively since the mid-1960s, but workers' real spendable wages are no higher now than they were almost thirty years ago. Minimum wage is at a forty-year low. Real take-home pay for twenty percent of the population has gone up, and real take-home pay for eighty percent of all workers, the production and non-supervisory class in the main, has declined about thirteen percent.

A decline which is accelerating incrementally in the canny Fabian fashion of moving very slowly in the direction you want to go so no one will really notice. There are many peculiar economic skews that have emerged in this age of total schooling that don't seem to add up if we are to believe that schooling is good for what ails your commoner pocketbook. Let us look at just a few of them:

Here's one to curl your hair. Back in 1900 when only a quarter of our kids went beyond elementary school, the median wage of a working man was exactly what the median wage of a working

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[2] The missing link in how problem-solving works its limiting mischief is the query: "Who frames the question? Who judges the answer?"

couple was in 1990, less 8 percent (inflation adjusted). Don't you find that strange? The country was rich then, but it's much richer now. So when you hear that schooling has grown dramatically and wages have shrunk dramatically you begin to wonder.

Think of this. In the poorly schooled America of 1900, the majority of children had the luxury of a real home and a full-time parent. But in well-schooled end of the century America about seventy percent do not.

Another fascinating anomaly you wouldn't expect is this. With the boom period in schooling, if one believes the public relations implication of school, the wealth of the nation should be spread far more evenly than it was before we had this benefit. But exactly the reverse process has occurred. Wealth is two hundred and fifty percent more concentrated at century's end than it was at the beginning. I don't want to be inflammatory but it's almost as if government schooling has made people dumber, not brighter, has made families weaker, not stronger, has replaced religion, lowered incomes, set the class structure in stone by dividing all children in early youth into classes which correlate very closely with family income, and has been a handmaiden to an alarming concentration of wealth and power into the hands of a small fraction of the population. That's some mighty work.

It's almost as if Dr. Goddard's belief that school could create a perfectly organized hive has come true, and that it soon will begin to deliver Thorndike's promise of enhancing selective breeding. Here's another puzzle. The wealthiest country in the world per capita is modern Switzerland, so we should expect to see schooling perfected there if school is the key to personal income. Yet in 1994 Switzerland sent only twenty-three percent of its population beyond elementary school and only twenty-two percent to college, versus our own one hundred percent secondary school enrollment and fifty percent college continuation. Even more puzzling is the fact that you find many Swiss corporate executives, bank presidents, government officials, etc., without a high school diploma. Are the Swiss radical or what? Switzerland goes into the twenty-first century never having granted a monopoly to schools as an employment screen as we have progressively done, and are seeking to do in an ultimate way with our disastrous school-to-work legislation—exactly as if being well-schooled had much of anything to do with anything real.

I say these things because I think they have bearing on the direction any true reform would take—it would be substantially disconnected from vocational considerations or any undue influence by global corporations, leviathan government agencies like the U.S. Labor Department or the oddly-named Federal "Education" Department, or vast institutional hierarchies like research universities. None of these entities, on the face of the long track record of each, has much of value to add to any vital transformation of schooling back into education. To get *there* we would have to believe that Jefferson's injunction to Colonel Vancey was correct, that no other depository of ultimate power is possible except in the people themselves (and not in their fantastically attenuated nominal representation by interests who, give them credit, sincerely *believe* it is of no more moment to deprive millions of the power to read than it is to test nuclear substances on their bodies, poison the earth, air, and water, kill countless millions worldwide every year with tobacco, or burn 100,000 Iraqis to death in an instant).

There is not a shred of evidence in any of the official school reform efforts underway that those who hold our constitutional rights in trust believe that Jefferson's curriculum to inform mass discretion by teaching common people their rights, how to effectively defend their rights, how to escape the cheats and swindles of powerful manipulative interests, how to be independent of titled experts, and how to master a range of useful knowledges *makes any sense* from the official perspective.

Advertising, public relations, and stronger forms of propaganda are so pervasive in our schools, even in "alternative" schools, that independent judgment is suffocated in mass-produced secondary experiences and market-tested initiatives. Schools deliver captive audiences of the young, bound and gagged, in exchange for free goods and services. Prominent *cigarette salesmen* command the presence of national leaders to pontificate about the educational future of the nation's children—only Gilbert & Sullivan could do justice to *that* script (or perhaps Kurt Weill).

Lifetime Learning Systems for instance announces to its corporate clients that, "School is the ideal time to influence attitudes, build long-term loyalties, introduce new products, test market, promote sampling and trial usage—and above all—to generate immediate sales." Stop worrying for a minute whether I'm trying to sell you some cockamamie conspiracy theory and use your eyes and ears to come up with your own hypothesis to explain the bizarre reality of life in the doll house.

Arnold Toynbee, the establishment's favorite apocalyptic historian in mid-twentieth century America—and hardly anyone's idea of a radical fringe conspiracy nut—on pages 292-293 of the

1947 abridgement of his monumental *A Study of History* said acerbically (after dismissing with contempt the utilitarian notion of education) that the original promise of universal education had been destroyed *at once* by "the possibility of turning education to account as a means of amusement for the masses"—and of "profit for the enterprising persons by whom the amusement is purveyed"—which arose quickly following the introduction of universal education. The possibility of fantastic profit set powerful forces in motion (as anyone accustomed to economic thinking would have predicted):

> The bread of universal education is no sooner cast upon the waters than a shoal of sharks arises from the depths and devours the children's bread under the educator's very eyes.

In Toynbee's analysis, "the dates speak for themselves":

> The edifice of universal education was, roughly speaking, completed...in 1870; and the Yellow Press was invented some twenty years later—as soon, that is, as the first generation of children from the national schools had acquired sufficient purchasing power—by a stroke of irresponsible genius which had divined that the educational labour of love could be made to yield a royal profit....

But the muster of vultures that attended the inception of mass forced compulsion schooling, attracted bigger, more ferocious predators than press lords:

> [The commercial institutions that set about at once to prey on forced mass schooling] attracted the attention of the rulers of modern...national states. If press lords could make millions by providing idle amusement for the half-educated, serious statesmen could draw, not money perhaps, but power from the same source. The modern dictators have deposed the press lords and substituted for crude and debased private entertainment an equally crude and debased system of state propaganda. The elaborate and ingenious machinery for the mass enslavement of semi-educated minds, invented for private profit under British and American regimes of *laisser faire*, has been simply taken over by the rulers of states who have employed these mental appliances, reinforced by the cinema and the radio, for their own sinister purposes.

> Thus, in countries where [mass] education has been introduced, the people are in danger of falling under an intellectual tyranny engineered either by private exploitation or by public authority.

This is strong stuff is it not? "Mass enslavement of semi-educated minds," "invented for private profit," "the people are in danger," "intellectual tyranny," "engineered," "sinister purposes"...and this he said fifty years ago. Did you hear about it? Neither did I. You have to know how to read to learn such things. And remember to pin all this inflammatory stuff on Dr. Toynbee; I didn't say it, he did.

The heavy hand of the same players who made our schools what they are originally, and who have had a century to deepen and enlarge their hold on the public mind unopposed, suggests that much may change in the superficial aspect of schools in the years immediately ahead, but without some other force intervening like Sampson to smite the private profiteers and public authorities hip and thigh, the mental appliances that have blinded us and which are applied through schooling and its surrogates in cinema, radio and press will complete their conquest of history sometime in the next century.

10. The Fear That Surpasseth Understanding

If you have a taste for narrative and have done much reading at all, you've certainly run into this reliable literary/dramatic cliché of the evil king/prince/princess/prime minister/chieftain who, rather than loving his people, fears them. That has been a staple of storytelling since Babylonia and who has not thrilled in righteous resonance to imagine panic-stricken Nero's despair on hearing his call for guards to protect him answered by the coolly immortal query, "Who will guard the guards themselves?" *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* (I learned that at St. Xavier's in third grade!)

That the leadership classes in our well-schooled century dismiss, despise, but especially *fear* the people they lead seems to me too well established to argue, but it occurs to me it might not seem that way to you. For that reason, and because this failure of the leadership to have learned how to love the rest of us who depend upon them is such an important piece of the puzzle why schools have performed the outrages they have upon us, I want to spend this and the next section documenting the charge. If all of us who could be so much more (as our history proves) now find ourselves eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves, then there must be a reason this has been done. Using Occam's Razor I have concluded the reason is our managers are afraid[3] of us.

In 1908, Dean James Earl Russell of Teacher's College in New York, once a student of Wundt's at Leipzig, challenged the NEA symposium of that year with these words. I shall set them as free verse to emphasize their mythopoetic nature:

How can a nation endure
That deliberately
seeks to rouse ambitions and aspirations
in the oncoming generations
which in the nature of events
cannot possibly be fulfilled?
Ifififififififififififif....If
the chief object of government be to promote
CIVIL ORDER
(and)
SOCIAL STABILITY [When did this happen?-Ed.]
How can we justify our practice in schooling the masses
How can we justify our practice in schooling the masses
How can we justify our practice in schooling the masses
IN PRECISELY
THE SAME FASHION
AS WE DO THOSE WHO ARE TO BE
OUR LEADERS?
[Music pregnant with menace] Is human nature so constituted?
That those who fail?
Will readily acquiesce?
In the success of their rivals?
Is it any wonder?
That WE [Who "we"?—Ed.]

ARE BESET WITH LABOR TROUBLES?

Pardon me my levity that I am so jolly and gentle with this butcher who ran the most important Prussian teacher /administrator training mill of this century (with University of

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[3] This is what the playwright George Bernard Shaw meant in *Major Barbara* when he charged the poor with forcing us to do away with liberty for fear they will drag us down into their abyss.

Chicago and Stanford its central states and far-western counterpart respectively). Is it possible you miss the chilling implication of this address made at a time when the NEA was a powerbroker's enclave and had not yet become the quasi-teacher's union it mutated into a bit later when the powerbrokers jumped ship like the rats they are. Well, you've heard Dean Russell now, time to hear from Dean Cubberly of Stanford, head and probably principal architect of The Educational Trust which controlled every administrative job of any account nationwide. In 1909, "Dad" Cubberly as he was known to the homeless flock of grad students who gathered around him to harvest his largesse announced that it was "high time" schools "give up the exceedingly democratic idea that all are equal" or that "our society is devoid of classes." From Cubberly's lofty perch as comptroller of education for the Pacific region, "the employee tends to remain an employee; the wage earner tends to remain a wage earner,"—as Woodrow Wilson of Princeton put it, "If this isn't true it will have to be made true," and school was to be the way to do it.

11. Crisis Fusing

Looking back on this period of institutional formation in her perceptive study of the evolution of American "history" texts, Frances Fitzgerald in *America Revised* took note of the profound changes that began to emerge following the prescription of great sociologists and thinkers as the history of our institutions and our unique liberties began to be effaced so that Jefferson's hope for the commons could be moved sufficiently out of reach:

> The ideology that lies behind these texts is rather difficult to define...it does not fit the usual political patterns...the texts never indicate any line of action...authors avoid what they choose to and some of them avoid the main issues...they fail to develop any original ideas...they confuse the social sciences with science...clouds of jargon...texts leave out ideas...the historical names are given no character, they are cipher people...there are no conflicts, only "problems"...

That last observation is a critical one for those trying to determine the architectural logic behind this seemingly well-organized project. *Problems* always have solutions, they properly belong to the realm of technology where proper technique is usually all a problem calls for; *conflicts*, on the other hand, are rooted in the part of human nature that arises from principle or morality—those things that cannot be compromised by any sane person who hopes to keep his or her soul. Conflicts often are impervious to *technique*, they often don't go away without the death or suppression of one of the adversarial positions.

From a philosophical perspective intent on *disarming the commons* of foundations, a long-range assault on the intractability of *principles* would begin by ignoring the fact that they exist at all. By stages this would proceed from a cadre of pedagogues trained to act without principle (but to follow orders and order instead), to an elimination of philosophy, religion, economics, history, and complex narrative in the mental furnishings of young minds. That the development of our school institution has followed this exact course doesn't mean, of course, that it was *deliberate*. You are at liberty to believe it just happened like a toadstool, but in any case the effects are exactly the same.

At the core of the fear, which I'll deal with more extensively in the next section, is a genuine concern for what educated minds and awakened consciousnesses among the superfluous people might do to protect themselves against a Darwinian economic, political, and technical order with a pressing need to label them rejects. American black and brown minorities remain self-confined and ghettoized—much less visible in the year 2000 than they were in 1960—because they have successfully been kept from maps of effective action and tools of their own liberation (which lie as readily at hand for the other oppressed as they did for the Amish), by ignorance. And not only men and women of color but an army of dispossessed whites (were they educated as Jefferson wished), could peacefully put an end to much that ails them if they infiltrated the still relatively porous political system and made use of dusty powers asleep there—as the progressive minority itself once did successfully.

Whatever truth this proposition has, it alone is not the only part of the great fear closest to the surface in the leadership mind. What lies there in the historical record is the perfect failure that all great historical governments have left for us to see: not one has been able to resist its own *violent* dissolution, if not in a single lifetime, then in two; if not in two, then three, etc. We have no models of central power which did not in a span of time fail the test of succession. Our own century has witnessed the crash of great regimes in spite of high technology advantages and a perfect will to shed as much blood as necessary to contain opposition.

Could that happen here? There are signs everywhere that it can. Indeed the tightening of the social screws in the United States, including the vastly enlarged use of forced schooling as a control and surveillance device, was triggered finally by the ominous populist uprising in the U.S. of a century ago, which was only barely contained by fraud, propaganda, and wholesale government-initiated violence. To know of such things, of course, you have to be given access to history.

The awful truth is that the final rationalization of the logic of the corporate economy—in its partnership with the political state—is at hand at this very moment. This crisis is upon us. The Law of Progressive Simplification which crisis fusing follows is independent of the managers of the system, it will assert itself explosively no matter who is at the controls. It demands the replacement of labor with machinery (no matter how well "educated" the labor is), it demands absolute standardization inside of the minimum allowable variation needed to prevent mass violent irrationality. Crisis fusing cannot tolerate human surprises, with all that injunction suggests; it implies to me an Armageddon may await as the peoples of the earth put aside with maximum loathing the scientific destiny managers have assigned them. I know whose side I'll be on.

The Law of Progressive Simplification has already adjudged eighty percent of the living population (let alone all increase from this point) as an obstacle to fully rationalizing planetary operations. The creative minority (as Toynbee calls them) who unleashed this whirlwind several hundred years ago has long since exhausted its imaginative power to control this thing it made, and losing its creativity, transmuted itself from an often positive force into a *dominant minority*, a transformation that signals a society in decline, one that makes excessive use of police and army to protect its private interests, which spies on its own people and attempts to tranquilize them with bread and circuses, a class that turns its back on the historic duties of Western leadership.

In such a milieu fear is omnipresent: fear of terrorists, fear of the homeless, fear of robbers, murderers, rapists, fear of politically incorrect language, fear of foreign competition, fear of bad investments, fear of being rooked, euchred and gulled by one's own guardians and associates, but most grand of all the sorry catalogue is the fear of what developed minds among the large outcast group might do if they were to discover how things really work. Fear is the medium in which schools float. Fear was the fuel for

Aryan aggression in the Vedas; it appears to be the energy driving the Aryan line of descent eons later.

John at the age of 49, "at the Chenango Upland Pistol Club on my farm in Oxford, New York," looking, to me, as though his awarenesses had been slowly simmering for quite some time and were about to boil over!

For quite a long time Oxford University in England has been a world center for this kind of fearful thinking Many of those who admire Oxford as the high peak of human and humane development will be revolted at this characterization, if they deign to notice it. What I see as high cowardice they might regard as the deepest devotion to duty, responsibility and the commonweal. "Love of humanity, not fear, compels us to act as good shepherds," they would say. To which the only reply is, "Look at the world you have made. Shame on you."

This high cowardice has been true for over a century in fact. In 1937 Walter M. Kotschnig's Oxford publication, *Unemployment in the Learned Professions,* laid the burden for the downfall of the Weimar Republic (which opened the way to the Nazi brand of socialism) squarely at the door of the expansion of German university enrollments in the 1920s, a short-term solution to post-war unemployment, which led to a vast unemployment of university graduates in the early 30s. Consider the ominous parallel between that earlier period and our own seemingly limitless expansion of university enrollments beginning with the subsidized GI group after WWII and continuing right up to the present universal aspiration for "higher education" whipped into a frenzy by the media and the public school apparatus, and now fast becoming a necessity as work is shipped overseas or given to machinery. Right now two-thirds of all work in the U.S. is temporary or part-time. Add these potent chemicals to a corporate establishment and government infrastructure on the brink of massive shrinkages of the job pool and add all these still further to a national "middle" class at least four times larger than any rational economic theory can justify and you can see we have a deadly balloon on our hands, swollen with ammonium nitrate fertilizer and diesel fuel already compounded inside, awaiting only the application of the blasting cap.

In a perfectly awful but inadvertently quite revealing book called *The Child, The Parent, and the State* (1959) grand high dragon of giantism in schooling, James Bryant Conant, a man whose long distinguished career included mixing poison gas in WWI, nuclear administration for the Manhattan Project in WWII, the sometimes presidency of Harvard and many other notable accomplishments which placed him at the center of social engineering in the U.S. for decades (he was responsible for the colossal "comprehensive" high school and for years was chief apostle of school consolidation) admits—or rather boasts—that the changes in public school were deliberate.

The transformation was importantly under the control of forces including "certain industrialists and the innovative engineers who were altering the nature of the industrial process." Don't take my word for this; the title is often available for a nickel or a dime on garage sale book tables. Conant takes sides with influential Alexander Inglis of Harvard whose *Principles of Secondary Education* (1918) put to rest any lingering doubt that official school changes were intended to enhance the school's power to serve individual intellect and character, "The causes of the change," which is referred to more than once in the volume, "were primarily *social* and *economic*." (Emphasis mine—JTG)

The new school was expressly calculated to serve a command economy and a command society—whatever that took or took away. Conant (referred to behind his back by his graduate assistants as "Old gas 'em and nuke 'em") is at pains to put to rest the silly notion entertained by some of his friends that, like Prohibition, the obvious human disutility of what has been done should dictate that the school policy of serving economic and political interests (remember Toynbee's similar charge) should be reversed, and families served once again as the irreplaceable building blocks of a good society, but no, *it cannot be reversed, says Conant*. "Clearly, the total process is irreversible..." The strong implication is that the direst consequences would follow: "a successful counter-revolution...would require a reorientation of a complex social pattern. Only a person bereft of reason would undertake [it]."

The amazing arrogance that allows such a statement to pass unchallenged through Conant's mind protects him from realizing that only persons bereft of reason because they were blinded by greed, pride, and fear could have launched the process he calls irreversible. ... For what had happened, implies Conant, was in the nature of a *coup de main*: "Reading Professor Inglis' volume in the light of what has happened since was to me a fascinating experience. *One saw a revolution through the eyes of a revolutionary...*" So it is a revolution we have undergone, not in my diction but in Conant's.

How could capital investment necessary to tool up a giant mass production machine economy be justified as long as millions of young people ran around eager to work? They would put the cutting-edge manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage. That was the question at the start of the 20th century, and an answer "was in the process of formulation", says Dr. Conant. And the answer was: "keep all youth in high school full time through grade twelve", of course this solution would aggravate "the problem of the very slow readers". But, hey, you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. And the fact that "the very slow readers" make it impossible for almost every other kid to have a chance at intellectual development was an unforeseen bonus not without utility for a system whose purposes were mainly focused on increasing *managerial* efficiency—never defined in terms of student learning except in the relative handful of élite institutions and programs maintained at public expense (like Stuyvesant High in New York), or the world of upscale private schooling.

Once you see that fear of too many becoming too smart supplies much of the fuel driving forced schooling, a great cloud lifts. Suddenly you understand the otherwise inexplicable—like how something as close to foolproof as teaching children to read has become a national tragedy for millions, and a lucrative career for a respectable fraction of the bottom-rung intelligentsia. You are finally able to understand things like the 1975 Trilateral Commission Report, *Crisis of Democracy* (I urge you to have your librarian get this one for you) which says, among other things, "A program is then necessary to lower the job expectations of those who receive a college education," or these gems from a book called *The Philosophy of Education* (1961) by Harvard professor Robert Ulich which I picked up for free at the end of a library sale because no one else would pay ten cents for it:

> We are [producing] more and more people who will be dissatisfied because the artificially prolonged time of formal schooling will arouse in them *hopes which society cannot fulfill*....These men and women will form the avant-garde of the disgruntled. It is no exaggeration to say [they] were partly responsible for World War II.

Responsible for WWII! I'm glad I have an editor to censor overheated prose like that. But seriously, is this not an echo of Dean Russell of Columbia's 1908 warning to the NEA? Or Kotschnig's Oxford University clarion call? What does this kind of thinking (which we met in the full glare of its intellectual brilliance in Pareto and Mosca's advice to the powerful in the early years of the century) augur for the internal affairs of PS 84, Manhattan? And what if they all are right, what if the risk is too great to bear in a social and economic universe like our own? How will you live with the degree of engineered stupidity it will take to protect you? Does it mean that human life must be mutilated to fit the current economic order—or that the order and all its custodians must be changed so we can breathe like honorable men and women once again?

It's a problem our leadership has failed to solve by taking the easy and expedient way out for over a century. The economic skew, the walled and gated compounds, the deliberate sabotage of reading, the enlargement of the police and surveillance classes (in which I include schoolteachers and social workers), all these things testify that the creative minority has lost its ability to create, to imagine a good fate for all of us. It has become a dominant minority leading the nation into a sort of neo-feudalism. They can no longer be trusted with our children, that is certain.

Ulich was a frightened man, of course; he warned against "the overcrowding of the professions," and "intellectual employment" in general, as if conscious that the displacement of industrial labor by machinery would soon be echoed in a displacement of the professional proletariat, too, because in spite of the cleverest obfuscations, learning to think well isn't removed from common reach at all. It has only been made to seem so by the kind of schooling we inflict on our young. In a burst of inadvertent sympathy with the bamboozled, Dr. Ulich casts the problem of modern schooling in a way that bears on the common future of all of us: "It is no wonder," he says, "that the most active of these people, losing their equilibrium, become bitter and use their uprooted intellectuality for destructive [purposes]." But what else would you have them do, Doc? Teach at Harvard?

12. Burning Books and Other White Trash

If depriving people of access to literature, history, philosophy, religion and myth in the interests of managing society safely and centrally like a corporation is a key to understanding the problem of modern schooling, as I believe it is, then we are not in the presence of a sinister conspiracy but a genuine bankruptcy of soul and spirit among the managerial classes, a lack of will, courage, and the imagination to see which way to steer the ship in the best interests of all the crew. If so, we are living in a time the planet has seen on many occasions before, in the corruption of the Ptolemies, in the license of Nero, in the reckless adventures of Alcibiades, in the decay of the Plantagenets, the enfeeblement of the Pippins, the suicide of the Stuart line, the inability of Cromwell to solve the challenge of succession, the gay delirium of the Hapsburgs, and many more; no regime endures, people who lead too comfortable lives become exhausted, losing the ability to lead.

But not losing the power. At least not quickly. The Prussian philosopher Georg Hegel added potent weapons of social control to the armory of those who could understand and nowhere were the instruments Hegel forged better understood than among the Anglo/American internationalists who gathered at Delmonico's in Manhattan in 1882 at the celebration dinner for Herbert Spencer.

It is no exaggeration to say that Anglo/American political interests owe much of their global sway to the close reading of Hegel made at the fatal-choice point when modern schooling began. The trick in modern management then became to end the dialectic, to stop history.

That will end unpredictability, according to Hegel. This might be accomplished by discipline, coercion, or even duplicity but the difficulty with those methods is that contrarian forces build inside those whose human nature has been mutilated this way and eventually the piper has to be paid. This is why no government in the human record has ever endured. Implicit in Hegel, however, is another, safer, way to disconnect dialectic, by using psychological strategies to render the opposition dumb, unable to sustain coherent trains of thought long enough to effectively pose obstacles to management. A whole palette of colors has been made available by social, mechanical, and electronic technologies to accomplish this goal but the primary tool is to break the ability to read. Complex text was early on in history perceived as a primary toxin to powerful states; utopian writing is universal in smelling danger in books. The first founder of the Chinese universal state, the Emperor Ts'in She Hwang-ti confiscated and burned the work of the philosophers for fear their arguments would thwart his own plans. The Caliph 'Umar, who reconstituted the Syriac universal state, wrote instructions to dispose of the famous library at Alexandria:

> If these writings of the Greeks agree with the Book of God they are useless and need not be preserved; if they disagree they are pernicious and ought to be destroyed.

Hitler's literary bonfires are often used as a vivid symbol of twentieth century *realpolitik* but the literalness of the Nazi pyres really vitiated their effectiveness, offering an inspirational symbol to his opposition; at the very same time the token burnings went on, real immolations of contrarian thought were happening through the public relations vehicles of Edward L. Bernays and Ivy Lee, through the market strategies of corporate managers, from the actions of close students of language and political leverage like the Fabians, and in the council chambers of the now mature national state systems of the coal powers. The rise of marketing science signaled the triumph of Machiavelli over Jesus of Nazareth.

Consider Turkey where Kemal Ataturk was outdoing Hitler linguistically on a monumental scale, by actually changing the national alphabet so that vital writings of the past were entombed in an obsolete tongue; from 1929 onwards all Turkish books and newspapers had to be printed in a new alphabet, all documents composed in it, all schoolchildren instructed in it *and no other*. If you want to put a national culture to death, put its historical records and literature out of reach and see how far that takes you to your goal. The classics of Persia, Arabia, and Turkey were lost in one stroke to new generations.

If Turkish practice doesn't strike you as very significant, perhaps its forward echo into modern China will where 1.2 billion Chinese, a fifth of the population of the planet, are being cut off from the long past of Chinese literature through simplification of the characters of the language will. In the course of time, the change to simplified characters will have the same sort of result as the burning of books; in the opinion of Lord Lindsay of Birker, a professor at Yenching University outside Beijing where I went recently to observe the effects of Westernization on traditional Chinese culture, the generation educated entirely in simplified characters will have difficulty reading anything published in China before the later 1950s.

Jean Patton, once a student at the famous Lincoln School of Teacher's College where teaching the children of *prosperous* families not to read very well became a sort of religion in the 1920s, reflecting on her own experience, likened it to a bonfire of those books which might challenge the established direction assigned by managers. When provocative books are replaced in a kid's formative years with easy books and neo-literature, there is seldom a turn to muscular reading later on. Simple to complex is not only a false doctrine, but a pernicious one.

When Samuel Johnson wrote that his fear of Hamlet's father's ghost had driven him once from reading at the table to the safety of his bed, he was referring to himself at nine; when Abe Cowley speaks of his "infinite delight" with Spencer's *Faerie Queen* and its "Stories of Knights and Giants and Monsters and Brave Houses," he is speaking of the child he was at twelve and of a book beyond the reach of most college graduates today. Dick and Jane? "Frank had a dog. His name was Spot"? There are many ways to burn books without a match.

In his chapter "Schism in the Body Social" of the 1947 abridgement of *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee calls our attention to the dilemma caused by "the many diverse contingents of disinherited men and women" who have been subjected to "the ordeal of being enrolled in the Western internal proletariat" in this century. The ordeal of being enrolled. According to Dr. Toynbee, "the manpower of no less than ten disintegrating civilizations has been *conscripted* (his word, not mine) into the Western body social" and subjected to "a process of standardization" which blurs and in some cases wipes out "the characteristic features by which these heterogeneous masses were once distinguished from one another." Nor, says Toynbee, has our society been content to prey upon its own "civilized" kind:

> It has also rounded up almost all the surviving primitive societies; and while some of these, like the Tasmanians and most of the North American Indian tribes, have died of the shock, others, like the Negroes of Tropical Africa, have managed to survive and set the Niger flowing into the Hudson and the Congo into the Mississippi—just as other activities of the same Western monster have set the Yangtse flowing into the Straits of Malacca. The Negro slaves shipped across to America and the Tamil or Chinese coolies shipped to the equatorial or antipodean coasts of the Indian Ocean are the counterparts of the slaves....

And not only "lesser" peoples, Darwin's "disfavored" races, have been so manhandled, the free domestic population of these states has also been "uprooted from the countryside and chevied into the towns" in preparation for a centrally engineered replacement of small-scale mixed farming by mass production specialized agriculture. Crops produced, says Toynbee, through "plantation slavery." If "plantation slavery" seems too impossibly melodramatic for you remember it is the Doctor's phrase, not my own; yet what goes on to produce the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the rugs we walk upon if we walk upon good, hand-knotted ones, the baskets we employ seem *very like* the products of that offensive word "slave" if you care to inquire very far.

The English were the first to do this *plantation thing* with their own people, "uprooting its own free peasantry for the economic profit of an oligarchy by turning ploughland into pasture and common land into enclosures." This state-inspired "push" from independent livelihoods enjoyed by yeomen reduced them to the condition of "white trash" in Toynbee's inimitable Anglican phraseology. And it was powerfully augmented by a "pull" from the urban industrial revolution also being engineered from the top which replaced handicraft with the products of coal-driven machinery. During the transition, the owners of the new technology made abundant use of legislation, police, spies, sabotage, and propaganda to ensure that the old ways would perish.

If you try hard to visualize all this milling activity of beaten peoples and "disinherited men and women" as historian Toynbee sees them, you will be better prepared to come to grips with the problem of modern schooling *from the impersonal perspective*, as the corporate state must see it. What is a neo-Hegelian state to do with its masses after they have been first "degraded to the ranks of a proletariat" and then systematically replaced by machinery? What would you do? What can anyone do with "white trash" in an overcrowded world that neither needs their labor nor company? I need not mention people of color. Remember that in a state guided by rational principles (rather than, say, religion or a feeling of national cousinage), dealing with people, like dealing with industrial waste, is at bottom a question of technique, not one of principle, whatever public face you put on things to placate the superstitious and sentimental. I hope some of this makes you uneasy, for we are surely entering uneasy times.

When you begin with Toynbee's observation that most of the citizenry of a modern state is in a condition of "disinheritance" and hence *dangerous* (he said that more than fifty years ago), it is not surprising that a condition exists calling for a "creative" solution: Why not, for instance, set *some* of the dangerous to guard the others (!) and privilege the guardian class a little to compensate it for doing the dirty work. This is of course the solution reached in the Nazi concentration camps where Jews were recruited to assist in the management of Jews—and no shortage of recruits was found. Just so it is done in the corporate state except instead of calling the service class "*kapos*" as was done at Treblinka and elsewhere, they are designated "bureaucrats." Toynbee is positively eloquent about what function bureaucrats primarily serve and so we shall follow his lead to see what it might tell us about schools. In a corporate society the interests of "the creative minority" (and its manifestation in decline as "the dominant minority") are served by conscripting one's human brothers and sisters into a massive two-tier proletariat. The greatest number of these must be kept scrupulously away from what history (or any particular culture) has called "education." Toynbee explains why:

> A lower-middle class which has received a secondary or even a university education *without being given any corresponding outlet for its trained abilities* was the backbone of the twentieth century Fascist Party in Italy and National-

> Socialist Party in Germany. The demoniac driving force which carried Mussolini and Hitler to power was generated out of this intellectual proletariat's exasperation at finding that its painful efforts at self-improvement were not sufficient....

See, just like the beast-men in Wells' Island of Dr. Moreau, a proletariat with a sense of entitlement doesn't take frustration lying down. As you now have a clue, for a long time in academic circles, this insight has been considered a truism, and from the halls of Ivy to policy tables is from the left hand to the right in the United States.

Unless you want your proletariat to become a demoniac driving force you better be damn sure they don't learn much, apart from fear, boredom, routines, obedience, and an inability to focus or sustain their attention. This latter can be done by keeping them away from any profound exercises in writing and reading. It really is that simple. The amazing thing is that Toynbee, and by extension the entire aristocratic strain in the leadership class he represents, cannot see any other alternative than doing this because, as he hastens to tell us, "the religion of the masses" is violence. In other words *there is no choice* for responsible governors but to face the terrible truth that the peasants *are* indeed revolting. The only proles Dr. T could find who managed to save themselves from coarseness, did it by escaping their proletarian nature. Now you would think such an observation might lead to some determination to get rid of the practices that *create* unrooted, unskilled people, but according to the sophisticated economic theory, you can't have a modern society without an underclass to control wage inflation. Catch 22.

Or to look at it from an ancient perspective, Socrates told Glaucon and Adeimantus they couldn't have a society where they could loll around on couches eating grapes without creating the fearsome security state of the *Republic*, so once that kind of privilege for "the creative minority" is considered essential for civilized life, everything else horrible follows. The escape route from the circularity of this madness comes to those who see a prize like this isn't worth the effort. That philosophies exist which scorn such a definition of the good life must have been known to Toynbee but apparently he considered such things out of social reach, the human nature of creative minorities being what it is; in any case the rest of us might want to keep that possibility in mind—there are other ways to organize economies, even capitalist ones, just as there are other ways to organize schools. Toynbee directs our attention to Russia (from his WWII vantage point) to see what our own danger might be if the masses are allowed any more ambitious ideas than beer, fistfights, and necking in the back seat of the flivver.

> In Marxian Communism we have a notorious example in our midst of a modern Western philosophy which has changed in a lifetime quite out of recognition into a proletarian religion, taking the path of violence and carving its New Jerusalem with the sword on the plains of Russia.

The unreality gets worse. Because the *working-class* proletariat is conceived by Toynbee (who, keep in mind, is one of the good guys!) as needing constant management (government nannies) in order that its labor be extracted without exposing the creative minority to its wrath, a second proletariat, like the concentration camp *kapos* already mentioned, if milder, must be created—"a special social class" as Toynbee refers to them "often quite abruptly and artificially" assembled to perform the function of managing the larger proletariat.

The suddenness or deliberation in the assembly phase depends upon the lead time available to the creative minority to prepare the appropriately-sized cohort which will be needed. A few examples will make the idea clear. If the creative minority decides to wage war, a vast enlargement in the number of noncoms and line officers will be warranted; if it decides to concentrate public attention on its charitable benevolence, an expansion of the social worker corps; if on the spectre of common cause against crime, police and detectives, but at all times the power, quite elastic and always arbitrary, is retained in a few hands, whatever the appearances.

And the professional proletariat thus created should be seen, apart from duties it is assigned, as "a special class of liaison officer" between the creative minority and the masses, one whose allegiance and privileges are owed to the former and not the latter.

It is this principle which marks schoolteachers who work too closely with parents and children for punishment. This is a particularly important idea. A management class (which includes schoolteachers) is to be drawn from the ranks of the aliens themselves, a class which will personally profit by assisting the ruling élites to manage, police, and discipline their own fellows into whatever behavior is officially prescribed. What a droll idea.

In a crude sense this class comprises what used to be known in racial politics as "Uncle Toms" and "house niggers," but more understanding is afforded by avoiding gross language and thinking of these people as the ultimate stability of a predatory leadership class's position, a leadership which does not associate with the commons. Toynbee is brutally clear where pedagogues fit in this scheme:

> As the virus works deeper into the social life of the society which is in the process of being permeated and assimilated, *the intelligentsia develops its most characteristic types: the schoolmaster...the civil servant...the lawyer....*

Here is a whole new way to see clearly what I was hired to do for my adult life. No wonder I encountered violent reactions from administrators as I deviated further and further from my real mission, although I performed *my nominal mission* (what parents expect of teachers) quite well. Toynbee strikes one ominous note after another in his anatomy of bureaucracy: these professional proletariat are at all times dependent for their livelihoods on maintaining the schedule of the political state for absorbing fringe groups or outsiders into the common proletariat. Where this is actively underway, the bureaucracy is large and growing larger. When the process of digestion is complete and no other conquest is wanted, in that moment the bureaucracy shrinks.

In such a system as this, as subject populations learn to discipline themselves, the need for expensive professional assistance to do that shrinks; if the promise of the desktop computer, for instance, is perverted into a primary teaching tool, and its semi-hypnotic hold on children's time is used to bind them to a "learning system" centrally prepared, then squadrons of schoolteachers and school administrators hired for a computerless moment in time which has passed will vanish like the snow in spring, along with all their rights and perks.

Using this formula we can see that bureaucratic giantism such as we endure now is always only a transitory phenomenon, but rather than that being an *optimistic* sign, when bureaucracy retreats, that is final proof the creative (or dominant) minority considers the proletariat tamed, hence the bureaucracy superfluous. There is only one important catch to the infinite elasticity of a bureaucracy as a reflection of the will of the minority, and that is the sometimes unmanageable violent side-effects of bureaucratic shrinkage, a condition caused, according to Toynbee, by "the bitterness of the intelligentsia".

Grounds for this bitterness have already been formed in so-called "civil servants" by the rigorous diminishment of their full humanity such positions require, and by the curious half-perception on the part of the bureaucrats themselves that they are indeed less than whole, having exchanged their souls for safety and relative ease:

> This liaison-class [remember its characteristic forms are schoolteachers, civil servants, and lawyers] *suffers from the congenital unhappiness of the hybrid who is an outcast* from *both* the families that have combined to beget him. An intelligentsia is hated and despised by its own people...a living reminder of the hateful but inescapable alien civilization which cannot be kept at bay and therefore has to be humored. —

The passage continues:

> ...And, while the intelligentsia thus has no love lost on it at home, it also has no honor paid to it in the [arena] whose manners and tricks it has so laboriously and ingeniously mastered. In the earlier days of the historic association between India and England the Hindu intelligentsia which the British Raj had fostered for its own administrative convenience was a common subject of English ridicule. —

All these inescapable insults which must be borne if the king's shilling is accepted yet they make the professional proletariat untrustworthy, even when it has demonstrated its loyalty. Servants of the state must be carefully trained, kept under close surveillance by subjecting them to incomplete, spiritually deficient educational training—however much it can be said to take place in a "gifted and talented" class. Untrustworthy is one thing, dangerous another. What makes the professional proletariat a potential seedbed of revolution is *unemployment*, and because what these pseudo-experts do can in fact be done by almost anyone, they are continually in jeopardy of losing their jobs:

A Peter the Great wants so many Russian chinovniks or an East India Company so many clerks, or a Mehmed 'Ali so many Egyptian shipwrights...potters in human clay set about to produce them, but the process of manufacturing an intelligentsia is more difficult to stop than to start; for the contempt in which the liaison class is held by those who profit by its services [Think of the relative fates of the terrorist Patty Hearst and her schoolteacher-lover Steven A. Weed as an object lesson] is offset by its prestige in the eyes of those eligible for enrollment in it. —And the result of watered-down classes for the "gifted and talented", and college enrollments numbering half of all the young to make them eligible for enrollment in the professional proletariat, are these:

> The candidates increase out of all proportion to the opportunities for employing them, and the original nucleus of the employed intelligentsia becomes swamped by an intellectual proletariat which is idle and destitute as well as outcast.
>
> Think of armies of graduate students, swarms of PhDs, Mongolian hordes of attorneys, a human swarm of social workers, agents, and investigators...Madre de Dios! In Toynbee's language, "the handful of chinovniks is reinforced by a legion of nihilists, the handful of quill-driving babus by a legion of failed B.A.'s.

"Quill-driving *babus*?" Does he mean *me*? If this is sounding more and more like modern institutional schooling in modern Goals 2000/School-To-Work America, the worst is yet to come. Toynbee stops just short of formulating a social law to the effect "that an intelligentsia's congenital unhappiness increases in geometrical ratio with the arithmetical progress of time", examples given are

> 1) The Russian intelligentsia, dating from the close of the 17th century, which "discharged its accumulated spite in the shattering Bolshevik Revolution of 1917" (a gestation period of some two and a half centuries), and
>
> 2) The Bengali intelligentsia, dating from the latter part of the 18th century, which Toynbee saw in 1946 "displaying a vein of revolutionary violence which is not yet seen in other parts of British India where local intelligentsia did not come into existence till fifty or a hundred years later." With benefit of hindsight we know, of course, that this professional proletariat brought British India down shortly after these lines were written.

In other words, too large a pool of "educated" service class proles (teachers, lawyers, clerks, officers, civil servants, etc.) is a time bomb ticking, and nowhere ticking louder than in gun-toting America. Now where does this leave your son and daughter who are promised a good, well-paying job in the global economy if they keep their noses clean, work hard in school, don't make waves, and ace out their friends in the testing sweepstakes? I'll let you figure that out. There should be good remunerative work in the society just ahead for spies, cops, and all that breed if your kids have the stomach for it, but as for the promises schools make they are now mathematically impossible to keep. It was always a Ponzi scheme like social security.

You see it isn't necessary to have a dark conspiracy to behave like a swine. You need only think of your fellow man as a biomass and yourself a technician of destiny. So if you were of the programmer class, how would you behave? I thought so. How easy it is to arrive eternally at the schools we already have; how hard to let the safety they represent go. Can you smell the books smoking? Turn on the TV if the sight frightens you; that's what it's for. I'm up and dressed, what more do you want?

13. Literacy and the Faculty of Thought

"Might not the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty for thought?" Hannah Arendt asked. If the proposition is correct we can lay the bill for the hideous amorality of our times at the doorstep of mass compulsion schooling which is mainly the institutionalization of thoughtlessness.

The underground grammarian Richard Mitchell deserves the closest attention when he tells us that reading is what gives us something to think about, otherwise our minds wander hopelessly. We cannot even contemplate human life for long in any sustained way without stories to frame our thought. Plato understood that control of storytelling was control of a society and schools as a river of controlled storytelling are matchless, at their best not even rivaled by the great electronic media.

Schools tell us over and over from an official perspective that life is dull, drab, arbitrary, brutish, and largely meaningless; they tell us the only things that really matter are the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. If reading is destroyed by schooling so is writing. Writing is the only way we have to extrude our normally squiggly, short-term attention onto a semi-permanent medium where it can be self-examined and strengthened. Our minds grow muscular by writing. The little frauds that keep us from seeing the truth about ourselves cannot survive in the medium of steady writing; *that is why friends and lovers should always insist upon letters from the people they plan to commit their lives to for no thinness of soul, falsity of affection, barrenness of* *imagination or intellect, no smallness of mind or meanness of temper can escape notice in an extended correspondence.*

Writing teaches clear, logical thought, to know ourselves, to extend and develop our minds far beyond their normal capacity. By such wonderful solitary exercise we gain deeper, richer selves; the hyper-development of mind through writing offers a chance for priceless insight into material and non-material reality and by allowing a somewhat detached perspective on the secret chaos of internal life, we are enabled to set our private world better in order, to live intimately with ourselves, and to enlarge the domain of our existence without any need for money, licenses, or even guides. Who would forego this if he knew?

In a literate culture, someone without a strong ability to read and write is plunged into blindness like Sampson's. America's great gift to humankind was to show how easily ordinary men and women could become extraordinary when given the simple code to unlock their innate power. According to Mitchell, knowing the conventions of the language is essential, except for the odd genius, but such foundations of literacy belong to the same class of mechanical detail as knowing how to finger scales for a musician. Scales don't make you a musician any more than being grammatical makes you literate. More is needed. The literate person is in control of those techniques special to writing and reading rather than to natural speech:

> He can formulate sentences that make sense.
> He can choose the right word from an array of similar words.
> He can devise structures that show how things and statements about things are related to one another.
> He can generate strings of sentences that develop logically related thoughts, and arrange them in such a way as to make that logic clear to others.
> He can make analogies and define classes.
> He can, in writing, discover thought and make knowledge.
> He can, in reading, determine whether or not someone else can do these things.

The literate person is familiar with a technology of thinking and perhaps even with a technology of morality. "To accept anything less as our definition of literacy," Mitchell concludes, "is to admit that hardly any of us will ever be able to think about anything...." It's difficult to talk to people about the dumbing down of school life and social life unless they are willing to reflect upon the full range of value that complex reading and writing—from fairy tales to philosophy—actually deals in, much of it in ways not summarizable or abstractable. The hyper-modern cliché that we read mainly for information when we read well is so colossally wrong-headed it is hopeless to ask people to despair about the deliberate deconstruction of literacy who have no notion what is being destroyed. When film images, illustrations, dramatizations and computer graphics are represented to children as equal or even superior to complex printed texts, a violent crime is committed.

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum in her book *The Literary Imagination and Public Life* says men and women who don't read well are

> ...blind to the qualitative richness of the perceptible world, to the separateness of its people, to their inner depths, their hopes and loves and fears; blind to what it is like to live a human life and endow it with a human meaning. ...

That's some indictment, and whether you've ever thought about it before or not, the minute you *do* begin to take stock of this primary power in which American ordinary people once led all the world by a country mile, you begin to wonder whether this ability *to read beyond their appointed station in life* was the passport for Americans out of English/French/German class society into something strange, wonderful and different, at least for a while.

Bill Arney, a teacher at Evergreen State College, once reminisced to me about this power reading has to transfigure:

> I remember the time I left Ivan Illich's house with the manuscript of *In the Vineyard of the Text* in my bag. One hundred and twenty-six double-spaced pages, many not even full pages because of the footnotes in a tiny font at their bottoms. Perfect for the plane ride across the country, I thought. When I landed in Seattle some six hours later I was on page twenty-seven, not yet a quarter of the way through Illich's text. Over the next days I completed my first reading of this commentary on Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon*—and I began to understand something when, around page ninety, I read that Illich had written this book to introduce his readers to a different way of reading. I began to understand that reading sometimes requires a discipline that even I am not used to.

Yale professor Harold Bloom, who has been called "the best read man of our time," said in his book *The Western Canon* that by reading books of aesthetic strength we learn our own inner power and its limits. I suppose Arney learned about his from Illich as I learned about mine from Bacon, thanks to a teacher I read in eighth grade, Kenneth Burke, thanks to another teacher I read in ninth grade, and Melville, who thanks to my mother I read in 10th. "We read," Bloom said, "to learn how to talk to ourselves and how to endure ourselves." So it has been for me.

For all these reasons and more we must not forgive those who sentenced us to be eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves, even though it was not done out of malice but only because they had no better stories of what common life might be, but the mass blinding must be stopped and new leaders found so it will never start again. There were times during the thirty years I was a schoolteacher when the sheer madness and mean spirit of the institution simply overwhelmed me. I hope now you can see why.

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Richard Lewis is the founder and director of the Touchstone Center in New York City. He has pursued two major interests: creating many books and developing the art of teaching. His most recent book is WHEN THOUGHT IS YOUNG: Reflections on Teaching and the Poetry of the Child *(New Rivers Press). The Center (141 East 88th St., New York, NY 10128; (212) 831-7717) helps children in elementary and middle schools express their experiences through the arts, using themes and images of the natural world. Richard's work as a teacher was documented in a film entitled THE JOURNEY WITHIN, produced by Renascence Films and a winner of a 1991 Ciné Golden Eagle Award. His new book of essays,* The Forest of the Mind: Selected Essays on the Imaginative Life of Children, *will come out this summer.*

Interview With Richard Lewis
Part Two
by Chris Mercogliano and Mary Leue

In the first part of this marvelous interview, Richard has been exploring with us the nature of creativity—how it starts, how it grows—and what kills it in school! As he points out below, it is, as much as for any other reason, the misapplication of "standards" that is responsible. Why? It is the effect on teachers *that creates the problem! Instead of calling on their own inner awareness of how* they themselves *learn, they are doing the job they were trained to perform! They have a mandate—a job to do, a program to administer!*

Just in itself, this fact creates an atmosphere in which the teacher is struggling to get children to carry out her *program rather than basing her work on what her children are really manifesting for her. And, as Alice Miller points out so clearly in* The Myth of the Gifted Child, *children sense it keenly as basically abusive, or, at the very least, intrusive, when a mother—and I believe, a teacher as well—does not obey the natural laws of learning—the developmental "formative principle" that Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Joseph Chilton Pierce, Leslie Hart, Stanley Keleman and others have described as the psycho-physiological basis for real learning! Passive children often operate out of the fear of humiliation by being criticized as "dumb" or uncooperative; active children, unused to intimidation, often become resistant to learning or even counter-abusive toward their teachers.*

Richard responds to a comment Chris has been making about our trend toward cultural degradation:

Chris. ... It's a problem, that our culture is becoming slowly degraded, and that the pace of that is quickening. It's a tough one. Maybe there's a balance there ...

Photo by Carol Grocki Lewis

Richard. Yes, I think there is a balance. And I think the balance really comes in *not* seeing expressiveness as the adolescent who doesn't grow up and is always in the self-expressive state. I would like to think of expressiveness as something beyond just a 'self' attempting to express itself. I would like to see 'expressiveness' as that form of human communication attempting to understand what's out there. The very origin of language, of our desire to communicate, be it spoken or written, or the language of movement or sounds or visual symbols, are attempts in some way to make sense of what is happening within and outside us. Language, in whatever form it is, stultifies if we don't use it as a means to make that linkage, as an expression, between ourselves and what's outside. It's a very complicated question, because this whole movement towards national standards is going in the direction of having children at each grade level take on a certain body of knowledge, which can easily work against the individuality and importance of our expressive learning.

C. It's an ancient American strategy. If something isn't working, do more of it.

R. Yes. My fear about the use of those kinds of standards is that if we're not careful, they will limit us on the deeply personal definitions each human being has about the world and ourselves in relationship to the world. In turn, what begins to happen is that we become carbon copies of ideas rather than allowing our ideas to evolve naturally so that each person takes an idea and personalizes it, making it their own.

Mary. David Reisman pointed that out in *The Lonely Crowd*, way back in the fifties. I wonder what happened initially, or at least what accelerated the process of conformism to the image as a general expectation. Did it happen because of the depression or because of absent fathers from different wars, or what? Historically, that seems to be where we are right now and it feels to me as though that process is accelerating, though, as Chris says, the less it seems to work, the more we have to keep doing it. Gunnar Myrdal once said that if we ran municipalities the way we run national policy-making, *nothing* would work, because if something doesn't work, you do it more.

C. The trouble is that that strategy to create more education, to make sure that kids learn more than they're learning now, kills genius in the individual. So many teachers say, "We don't have time to do those things any more. I have just barely enough time to teach the material so that the kids will pass the standardized tests, so that she won't lose her job, so the kids don't get to pursue their passion—and then they drop out of school.

R. What it does to the teacher is that the pressure on the teacher to accomplish certain "goals" doesn't allow the individuality of the teacher to evolve as a lifelong process. We're back where we began our conversation with that sense of the organic, which is not going to be felt, or experienced, because the teacher is under pressure to constantly keep up with what they're supposed to be teaching.

M. It's bad enough on the secondary level, but now they say that kindergarten has been destroyed. That was kind of like a refuge for children, for just doing what they felt like doing. But now the practice is of moving you ahead, first through Head Start and then kindergarten, and then first grade, and they say, "We've got to move you along, so that when you get to first grade, you're already drilled on how to keep up with things." It's insane.

R. But the other question, reading between the lines of this standardized knowledge, is that schools have been failing because one school is different from another school; that each school has its own level of competence. I don't think it necessarily is the school; I think it's the individual schoolteacher's sensibility that needs to be nurtured and encouraged. I know many, many teachers who work in very difficult situations who are doing extraordinarily good work. Their children are doing wonderful work. But the teachers who want to be doing this kind of work are persons still in touch with the inner dynamics of how *they* learn, what *they* think, what *they* feel—and are still a part of their own personal wonder. These dynamic haven't been lost, knocked out of them by the forces of schooling, and the demands that go along with schooling.

So the question for education is how do we get to the inner life of that teacher so it remains healthy and functions in such a way that when they, as teachers, are working with children, it's really a collaborative process that's going on between the child's excitement and their own personal excitement—moving, changing, gestating—all those qualities of experiencing our inner lives go through.

We're doing a project now at the Touchstone Center, to give you a small example, that we've been working on for the last year called "In the Spirit of Play." It's a project in three schools in New York City—as well as with a group of teachers and artists in Dublin, Ireland. An important segment of the project is to work with teachers prior to our working with children in various classrooms. The focal point of the project is to help children get back to the feelings of the power of their own playfulness, and how this playfulness is one of the most important means in our understanding the world—and if you don't have that interplay between yourself and the world, something goes awry.

C. That's going against the grain, though.

R. Definitely going against the grain. And sometimes, when I begin working in the classroom, the first thing I say to the children is, "Oh, how many of you enjoy playing?" Everybody's hand goes up, except for a few children who are probably asking, "Who is this guy here, what is he doing here?" And then I say, "Well, how many of you like to work?" And not too many hands go up.

What's so interesting, as I continue to ask them about play, is how children don't see play, obviously, as a necessary part of education .... of their learning.

C. Nor do their parents.

R. Yes. But going back to the teachers for a second. One of the things we've tried to do with the teachers we're working with in the schools is to move them through some of the processes we thought we'd be doing with the children. I'm fascinated by listening to *their* responses to these questions of mine.

One of the teachers said to us, "You know, that's something you're never taught to look at in college or our training situation. Nobody ever talked about it. In fact, it was just the opposite, it was how we can get children to work! And how you get them focused onto their work. And that play is really what you do in recess or after school, but it's *not* part of what we call curriculum."

M. And now they've cut out recess. You have to work!

R. Yes. But the question it raises in my mind is the fact that even teachers, unfortunately, have been made to accept the idea that play has nothing to do with the mind, that the mind shouldn't really be playing, that it really needs to be working, and that learning has nothing to do with play because you only learn when the mind is working. Play is the function, on the human level, certainly, that allows much of what we call consciousness to come into being. Without the play element an organic and healthy evolution of consciousness simply doesn't happen.

M. You know, I remember when I was teaching first grade in our school a number of years ago, I had a little boy named Chris, an interracial child, quite light. His mother was black and his father was white. I was teaching him, quote-unquote, his colors. He knew maybe three. By the time I got through teaching him, the only color he could recognize was black. It was totally counterproductive. He was a very energetic child, a very self-motivated child, and I had not understood at that point what the nature of the process was so that I could work with it. I thought it was up to me to fill in the gaps—a cognitive process.

Herb Kohl has written a book called, *I Won't Learn From You.* And this was *my* learning. "I won't learn from you." It took me years to realize what had happened. I just felt like a bad teacher. Teachers really need this in their educational process. They need to understand much better the nature of learning. And it isn't being taught. I'd gone through educational training and I had to admit that I didn't know it. I had to learn the hard way.

R. And you can't just talk it out. We've got to get our bodies moving—and see again what this means, as a child—and for ourselves.

So, thinking again about the questions of standards, it seems there has to be another side of the coin, which asks, "What about the learning that's not standard? Is there another shape of learning that *can't* be standardized, that *can't* be measured, that *can't* be checked?" There are levels and places in our being that are difficult to access but they are there. We know that they're there because we experience them in our own lives all the time. And I think if we don't admit to the existence of these levels, then the so-called standardized levels of learning simply become factual concepts we never use in any original or personal way. It's interesting, because one of the standards will be to try to help children think creatively. Thinking creatively cannot done by a menu—or a fact sheet.

M. It bloweth where it listeth.

R. And it landeth where it wisheth.

So, what do we mean by a child or an adult thinking creatively? Obviously we have to go through all kinds of machinations of thought in order to get a thought which we call new or different or unusual. And sometimes it's not an easy process. It's a very difficult process to find what we term a creative thought. And it's not a clean-cut process. There's a struggle always for ideas to re-emerge so they feel like they've gone through some transformation or even transfiguration.

How do we get adults to think in these terms? We must put them in a situation where they can experience the fullest sense of what thinking is about. And, again, it's not a prescribed process. It's often improvisational—and spontaneous. We have to construct a situation where we're not frightened of that quality of looking at things which can't be perceived in a clear-cut way.

C. You can't have somebody standing over you saying you have an hour to think creatively. At the end of the hour I'm going to grade just how creative you were.

M. I started a week-long gathering at my family farm in the Berkshires in Massachusetts. We call it the Berkshire Live-out, and we gather the last week in July. I want it very rock-bottom cheap so that anybody can come. People can camp in the orchard if they want, cook their own food or bring it to share or we all cook and eat together, and people who have things they want to talk about will come. I've been pretty successful in getting people who have had the role of being leaders in the educational process like John Gatto and Jerry Mintz and Pat Farenga from *Growing Without Schooling*. And they're not on a platform doing a pontificating kind of thing, so people feel comfortable to share or not share and to know that their considerations are as relevant as anyone else's. We spend a lot of time, thanks to Jerry, just playing. Jerry teaches ping-pong and the kids love it! He's great. He's just right on the level we're talking about.

But it's my belief that only that which comes spontaneously, stimulated by the atmosphere you're invited to participate in really counts. What you choose to do is up to you. And lovely things come out of it.

A lot of people say, "What's the agenda? Who are the speakers? What's the schedule?" And it takes time for people to understand that, and then they write about it, and then I publish it, and then they say, "Oh, I missed out on something interesting." We just keep on with it. I don't know any other way to offer people the kind of thing you're talking about, unless it's a prescheduled kind of thing, and they've got to pay money. And that's not okay with some people, because they're just homeschooling parents or just interested by-standers, or whatever.

To me, the hierarchical structures we have set up to keep people separated from each other so there's no freedom of access are a big problem. When my husband was on Sabbatical at Oxford with our two youngest kids and I, people walked into these lectures by these august people FREE. No barriers. We're terrible about that kind of thing. Maybe you have more access in New York City.

R. No, I don't think so. There are certainly many things you can do in New York that are free, but you have to earn your keep, so to speak, in order to get to a certain stage ...

M. Ivan Illich says that. It's the scarcity concept that we think makes it more valuable.

R. When you think of the resources of the people in the world, from the person who bakes bread in the morning to the person who is a scholar sitting in front of a book all day; these people are not really used as part of the general milieu of education. You can imagine if the learning environment embraced the existence of all these kinds of people—what a difference it would make—to children and teachers alike. One of the first responsibilities we have is to share our pride in the skills we have developed. The desire to pass on these skills is a very distinctive human trait.

C. It's an even exchange.

R. How to use the resources of all persons has to be a part of our rethinking of what education could become.

M. You know, George Leonard and Paul Goodman in the fifties were talking about the kind of thing where people come in. Paul Goodman hoped that there could be an exchange between the schools and the rest of the city. He wanted storefront schools, all kinds of schools. And George Leonard talked in *Education and Ecstasy*, how it could be absolutely ecstatic in the excitement and the joy of learning. We've moved so far from that kind of free thinking about the educational process. It seems to me we've regressed dreadfully.

R. If we could figure out a way to utilize wonder and enchantment and our sense of awe into forms of understanding, then some of the decisions we make in regard to children would be very different.

Last year I was working with junior high-school teachers, and one of our discussions was about how they felt that the children they were teaching seemed to be lacking *wonder*. And we got in a long discussion about what's happening on a societal level if wonder is disappearing in thirteen-year-olds. And we all asked, "Well, what's *our* relationship to wonder? Is wonder something that is really part of the societal fabric? Or is it something relegated to only very young children? And then as they get older, they hear us say, 'You can't wonder too long because, if you do, you might get lost. You might be in a day-dream, you might be somewhere you shouldn't be.'"

M. It also might be something to do with the transfer from the *Um-Welt* to the *Mit-Welt*, from the feminine to the masculine way of emitting and transmitting life. You have to be in the "real" world, but the "real" world is numerical, sequential. It's lost its global, its holistic quality.

C. In *The Sibling Society*, Bly says we're just inundated kids now—inundated with information. There's just so much information coming from so many sources.

M. We've talked about a lot of important things. I am so grateful to you for coming all this way to speak with us. How would you summarize your work at the Center?

R. The Center's philosophy has not changed much over the years. My original intention with the Center was to help create a way to reach the natural core of each child's imagination.

M. That's important work! Thanks.

C. This has been great! Thanks so much.

R. You're certainly welcome and I thank you too.

Emily's Tree

Imagination and the Soul of Learning

by Richard Lewis

For some time now I've kept on my desk a pencil drawing of a tree drawn and given to me as a gift by Emily, a ten-year-old child I worked with in a public school in New York City. Even after these many years I still have a distinct memory of how with great concentration and effort her thin shoulders bent over the top of her desk, she carefully made her drawing.

The making process was important to Emily because she was someone who despite great personal hardships wanted and needed to make things—particularly with words and images. Luckily she had discovered early on that by making poems and pictures she could often express what she was thinking and feeling. She also discovered that the kind of making she most liked to do was not something school had much time for. When I first met Emily the only pictures and poetry she made were often secretly pushed into the lower part of her desk where she stored crumpled papers of long-forgotten homework assignments.

Like many children, Emily's interest in making things was not unusual. Like most children, she also enjoyed playing. From her play in earliest childhood, I suspect, she assumed that one way to make sense of things was to play them out, to change things until a pattern emerged that was pleasing even if no one understood what she was playing at or making. Knowing Emily, I'm sure she was also comforted by the textures and shapes of small things; the fresh rush of air when she opened a window; the scraping sound of her teeth as she ate a piece of bread, the lightness she felt in her arms after it had stopped raining. To her, these were signals, silent messages she conveyed to herself that she was alive to the person she was slowly becoming.

But Emily never wanted to share or speak about these feelings in school. In her mind, school was a place to perform what she had been asked to know. Yes, she was learning—but only in isolation from herself. And her imagining, the pleasure she found in making things, was always what she did in secret somewhere else.

I recall, long before I had worked with Emily, how a group of children in another school once challenged me one day on my concern for the "imagination." "But Richard," they vehemently protested. "it won't get you into college or get you good grades." I stood my ground and explained to them why they need to imagine: how the imagination is what we are and without it, we really don't know ourselves—or each other. By the end of our discussion I don't think this excited group of youngsters had really accepted what I was saying. I worried then, as I do now, that these children had prematurely accepted a point of view which denied them access to a quality of life, of living, that can be experienced from within.

Why must Emily, and those questioning youngsters, be asked to hide from what they think and feel?

Why, I continue to ask myself, is this form of knowing so difficult to bring into the mainstream of what we use as the cornerstone of learning? Why must Emily and those questioning youngsters be asked to hide from what they think and feel? Why has so much of education, despite its concern with passing on the mechanics of literacy and computation, all too frequently made the recipients of its teachings incapable of relating to what is alive and meaningful in themselves?

One way to view these questions is to look back at how Emily made her tree. The great concentration she used to draw her picture is, in effect, the power of the imagination to focus and build, from a complex of many thoughts and feelings, a single image of a tree. This image of a tree initially within Emily, as she draws her picture, becomes a tree outside of herself. The imaginative skills at work in Emily are not to be marginalized, for they stem from our human desire to relate what is inside and outside of ourselves—linking us to what we are to what exists around us.

The imagination seen here as a consolidator is not to be confused with our more commonly accepted view of the imagination as an illusionary process, or, as some would have it, "making believe." The consolidating imagination is a process through which we are able to form a perceptual bond between ourselves—and everything outside of ourselves. I believe this perceptual bonding to be a biological entity and activity in the same way the eye, the tongue, the ear, the nose, the fingers enable us to see, to taste, to hear, to smell, and to feel. Without our imagination it would be impossible for us to experience the infinite qualities of our senses—as well as being able to shape our thoughts, ideas and images about these experiences. In this instance the imagination is an organic process uniquely organizing and reproducing processes in each human being with the same individuality as do our fingerprints or the modulations of our separate voices.

By making her tree, Emily was activating the biological impetus of her imagination—not only to imagine, but to bring her imagining into a situation where it could be touched and seen, spoken about and shared. She was fulfilling the instinctive need to project one's inner imagery to some outer image of understanding. And this need to say what I see, what I feel, what I want to know or don't know, is a biological necessity as much as our eating and loving, and the very act of breathing itself. Whether we speak with musical sounds, bodily movements, written words, spoken voices, or visual images, we are by turn linking ourselves to the first imprint, the first significant gesture made by human life to speak and somehow be known consciously to itself.

Last year, in the same school to which Emily went, I worked with Jose, another ten-year-old child, who, also in a moment of attentiveness and concentration, looked at some of the pictures he had just painted of the sky and told me what he saw:

The wind is pushing
the sky
through you.

One sky is like being in it
so this sky is a nice sky
to the family that is in my heart.

I imagine it will always be there.

When you spin around
and spin around
it looks like

you're flying
with the sky.

When it rains
there's a smooth wind by you.

The wind loves its body.

As I read his words back to him, I was reminded how, as imaginers, as biological beings, we too interact, interchange, fuse with and penetrate the ever-changing processes of nature. We feel in the deepest part of our imagination, as did Jose, the sky moving through and flying with us, and the wind as a body loving itself.

Are not the electrically charged pulsations of our thoughts like the immense energy with which the wind propels itself? Is not the mind's circuitry like the intricate network of forces found in the smallest particles of living matter? Might not our imagining be a mirror of what we observe in all of nature—reflecting the shaping and evolution constantly taking place around us? Can we possibly view the imagination not as an abstract appendage, but as a primary source of our consciousness, capable, as Jose was, of perceiving "the family that is in my heart" where the sky "will always be"?

If we can revise our understanding of the imagination so that it will be seen as the basis of learning, we will be able to look at Emily's tree differently. By the outward realization of her inward image of a tree, she has produced a spark, a filament of energy, which however long it lasts has brought her closer to being a participant in her singular life. She has made of the imaginative act a bridge to a portion of a sky that can be brought to her heart, not as an abstraction, nor even as a metaphor, but as a physical reality binding her to the essential properties of her aliveness.

If we are to educate the young to value only the final products of their learning as steps in educational success, we have lost the very soul of what learning initially was for every child; a never-ending means to understand and communicate this unique sense of life each of us inwardly has been offered. The making of a tree by Emily may not be a whole curriculum, but it is one choice in retaining the energy—and life—that make up our inner world, and, if sustained, much of the world in which we live.

From *TouchTheFuture*, Fall,1996

Competition, Conditioning & Play

by Joseph Chilton Pearce

Joe Pearce is internationally recognized for his visionary view of learning and is a member of the board of directors of Touch the Future. See also Chris Mercogliano's interview with him in the Journal of Family Life, *Spring, 1995, "Having Children," pp. 26-30.*

> **Real learning takes place by what Maria Montessori called the absorbent mind of the child. This is when the three parts of the mind, thought, feeling, and action, are focused totally on building their construction of the world, of themselves, of their relationships and laying down the foundations for all later forms of intelligence.**

Play is the most serious undertaking of a child's life. It is the umbrella in which all learning takes place and it is dramatically different at the different periods of a child's life. Play is a mind-set, an attitude, a condition of total openness that the child must have for real learning to take place. You can have conditioning or behavior modification which we generally call learning, but it's not learning. It's conditioning. Real learning takes place by what Maria Montessori called the *absorbent mind of the child*. This is when the three parts of the mind, thought, feeling and action, are focused totally on building their construction of the world, of themselves, of their relationships and laying down the foundations for all later forms of intelligence. We make this profound error of separating education and schooling from play. Schools are set up for conditioning and behavior modification, which really inhibit the child's ability to open to and absorb the universe. This is one reason we find such little retention of the conditioning we think we're providing through schooling. A large study concluded that children retain only 3-5 percent of the information or conditioning we impose through schooling. Whereas the learning which through play is literally built in as a permanent neural patterning in the brain which is never lost.

If we could just recognize the direct correspondence between play and learning and the dramatic difference between the two, we could change our approach and produce 95% retention. This would involve the framework nature has set up for learning, which is play. By learning, we mean opening and developing the higher brain structures. This doesn't happen without play. Play is the learning and the learning is the opening of those blocks of intelligences. If you don't water a plant, the thing isn't going to grow. If we don't water a child's intelligence, through play, it can't grow. None of these inherent intelligences can be activated in the child's brain, body and mind until they are given a model of that intelligence or capacity in their environment. The model provides the environment in which that same capacity or intelligence can be developed and stabilized in the child.

If children can't trust the model or the world they're supposed to embrace, it is unlikely they will build a correct structure of knowledge of that world. They will build a defensive system to protect themselves. This will literally reduce their sensory intake dramatically. We know for example, anxiety-ridden children suffering psychological abandonment have a 25% to 30% reduction in sensory intake over children who are given total emotional nurturing. Nurturing means being provided with a safe space.

The higher forms of intelligence are not going to develop if we substitute the conditioning we call schooling for real play and at the same time put the child in competition with the model by testing them on the effectiveness of our conditioning, If you take competitive sports, for example, and interject it too early the child will restrict learning to a certain limited form to win applause. Again we have made the critical mistake of believing that conditioning is learning, they are not at all the same. Right and wrong, win or lose plays no part in nature's scheme. To take a highly stylized, rigid, specific form of action in which winning and losing is everything, where sensor plays a heavy role and error dogs the child at every breath, and think that this will make the child part of a social team is ridiculous. Our children will end up largely crippled in their ability to cohere as part of a social group because they are constantly surrounded by the possibility of failure. Competition implies failure. Children, on their own, will never play in that fashion. Competition isn't play. Play becomes conditioning and the natural intelligence of socialization is severely limited the minute we come in with adults calling the shots, creating the rules and regulations, doing all the training.

Organized play or teams competing against other teams crops up somewhere around age eleven. There's no doubt of that. The child before that period will participate in other forms of group activity, but they will not be competitive. Competition is a pre-puberty and puberty form of activity which has a dramatic role in the gene pool selection process which is preparing to open up through sexuality. At this stage you can't keep children from grouping together in some form of competitive activity. If you impose competition prematurely, you're acting very inappropriately to the whole development of the child.

Competition isn't play. Competition implies failure. Children, on their own, will never play in that fashion.

I think the little league is a disaster, in every sense of the term. It has not given us happy well-adjusted children. When adults stepped in and organized child's play into little leagues, we prevented children from spontaneously getting together, forming sides, creating their own rules and regulations. The young people used to work all that out on their own, which is the critical part. When adults step in and make all those rules and regulations we literally robbed the young person of their capacity to regulate social structures.

The final blow came from the multi-million-dollar television sports model we have created. This has become the goal children strive for and it impacts the values and behavior of children right down to the 6-and 7-year-olds. Just the other day I had an example of a parent with a child in a little league. These were 7-and 8-year-olds and the coach was calling them imbeciles and urging them to get out there and really put their all into it and you could see the utter confusion of the little children, their feeling of shame and guilt. And all the parents were lining up on the side of the coach. The children were literally failing to measure up to the expectations and standards of their parents who were condemning them and they didn't even know what for. This is a very strange form of modeling.

Given a safe environment, when that period of competitiveness opens, which is natural, young people meet it with great delight. Nature's agenda calls for this as we approach puberty and adolescence. They will not interpret the challenge as threatening, but perceive it as a chance to develop more of their potential. Whereas competition to the child who is denied a safe space draws him or her deeper into the kneejerk defensive reflex. If they're in competition with their world, if they can't trust it, there is little hope of them moving forward with focused entrained energy and attention.

TouchTheFuture, *subtitled,* Unfolding new Capacities in Ourselves and in our Children, *is a quarterly journal edited and published by Michael Mendizza.*

Touch the Future (4350 Lime Ave., Long Beach, CA 90807, Tel. 310-426-2627, Fax 427-8189, e-mail address TTFuture@aol.com) is a learning design center whose current projects include:

TTF Dialogues (conducting 3-day gatherings in the spring and fall);
Nurturing New Minds, a video series "offering parents, day care providers and early childhood educators the latest vision of human development and potential;"
Imagination Stations, developing three centers in California "and over 100 'Resource Kits' to be distributed nationwide enabling national service organizations to create similar listening-learning environments in local shelters;"
Free Play, a creative learning center combining a studio, gallery and coffee house for adults and children offering informal apprenticeships with artists, poets, musicians, craftsmen, plus specialty toys, books and art—set up as a prototype;
Betrayal of Intimacy, tracing the roots of violence in the breakdown of bonding and trust in families in order to reduce and prevent sexual assaults and domestic violence;
International Birth-Education and Family Support Centers, based on the model of the Villagio della Madre e dell Fanciullo in Milan, Italy, to become a network of resource centers for families.

The following article is reprinted, with kind permission, from the newsprint-style Self-Health Newsletter. *Barry and Samahria Kaufman, co-leaders of the Option Institute in Sheffield, Massachusetts, have been well-known to the Free School Community ever since several community members explored the Option process with them during the eighties. We have published both an article and a review of Bears' (as he is affectionately known to his friends and Option Institute participants) new book,* Son-Rise: The Miracle Continues.

Is Happiness A Matter Of Choice?

Interview with Bestselling Author and Speaker, Barry Neil Kaufman

By Lois Grasso

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our country was founded on the promise of these basic "rights." Yet, for many, the pursuit of happiness has become a tug of war and for far too many, it has been reduced to the status of an old fashioned cliché. What is happiness really? Is it only available to us in fleeting moments? Or can we simply get in the habit of deciding to be happy always? Twenty years ago, Barry Neil Kaufman and his wife chose to be happy about their autistic son—who recently graduated from an Ivy League school. Maybe you saw the movie, Son Rise. Maybe they've got something here...

Lois Grasso: Perhaps your most famous book is *Happiness Is A Choice.* It seems such a simple statement, yet many would heartily disagree. How does it work?

Barry Kaufman: Most of us are brought up to believe that our emotional states of mind are not under our control: that the best we can do in our lives is cope and adapt. We even learn a vocabulary that makes us a victim to our feelings. For example, years ago I used to say to people, "You get me so angry. You make me so frustrated. You get me so annoyed." And if we listen to just the verbiage, what we are really saying is somebody else is in charge of those internal experiences we're having. In effect, we're learning that happiness is not a choice but a responsive event to what people say and do around us and the events in our lives.

What we teach people [at the Option Institute] is the opposite. Our experience is that, in fact, happiness is a choice. The corollary is *love is a choice* and by taking ownership and having the awareness that indeed that's so, we have a complete different possibility.

So, let me give you an example of what that might be. Years ago, we had a little boy who was considered irreversibly, neurologically impaired and damaged; an autistic little guy. And when we went around to try to seek input, and medical and psychological services for him, we heard people say repeatedly, "Wow, this is too bad. Wow, he is really classically autistic. There's nothing we can really change, and how terrible, how awful, how tragic."

Years ago, I think, if this had happened, I would have probably listened to those words and seen them as facts, rather than somebody's make-believe.

So at one particular time, a doctor shook his head and said, "terrible" as my son was spinning in circles and making strange sounds (this goes back two decades ago). And I remember walking out looking at my wife and saying, "You know, I never want to see or think, 'terrible' when we look at our son. We love him. He's special."

And in those moments we made up something completely different about him. We decided he was an opportunity. And in doing so, rather than feeling despair or dismay, we became really excited. We thought maybe this little boy was a blessing in our lives, and then in terms of action and activity, we felt really creative to create our own program. As a result, we worked with him literally twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for three and a half years.

We not only brought him out of his so called irreversible condition of autism and his so-called retardation, but he became a highly extroverted, lively, incredibly precocious youngster. Ultimately, a year and a half ago, he graduated as an honor student from a top ivy league university. When I think about him and his circumstance, it really was all about happiness. That happiness was a choice because we decided to create a view, or make up a belief about him which served us in terms of feeling good and feeling hopeful.

LG: And out of that came a very inspiring book and movie, and you've since developed The Option Institute. I guess it *was* an opportunity!

BK: Right. In effect, we help people to review the make-believes of their lives. You know, as kids, it's called "make-believe" and we're encouraged to see it as sort of our dreamworld. If we have a little matchbox we're driving around the floor, it's okay to call that a truck, and beep its horn or if there's a little doll it's okay to talk to her and rock her.

When we get older, people are saying about our make-beliefs, it's time to become realistic. And so the beliefs we tend to make as adults, we tend to be self-righteous about and we see them as sort of scripted outside of ourselves rather than inside of ourselves. So we teach people that let's look at the beliefs we have when events occur. Because our happiness and our unhappiness, our love and our hate, our feeling good and our feeling despair, is dependent upon what we decide about what we see. And we are in charge of that decision-making.

LG: I'm going to play devil's advocate, because I know that a lot of our readers will. There are a lot of scary things going on, for example, the Oklahoma bombing and the downing of Flight 800. How can one respond to these events happily without going into denial?

BK: What about the massacres occurring in Ruwanda right now? What about the terrorism that goes on in the Middle East or in Northern Ireland? How can you be happy in the face of that? Why would you want to be happy in the face of that? Actually, it's those very activities that inspire me to talk about this even more passionately and enthusiastically. Because the opposite of happiness is unhappiness. And unhappiness goes in many guises. Sometimes it goes in the form of despair. Sometimes in the form of sadness. Sometimes in the form of jealousy. Sometimes in the form of anger.

> **"...when a lot of people get together and do unhappiness collectively, that's called terrorism. War. "**

But the one thing that's not noted as we teach unhappiness—because I think we actually teach it from generation to generation—is that somehow if you're unhappy, it means you're sensitive. If you're unhappy when a friend gets unhappy, it means you're caring. If you're unhappy when somebody leaves you it means you must have really loved that person. So we use unhappiness constantly as a barometer to, sort of, demonstrate our humanity—to demonstrate our caring and suggest our protest to the environment around us. What we don't see is that this very same unhappiness is incredibly lethal.

Unhappiness expressed—that anger, that despair—outside of ourselves looks like drive-by shootings, rape, child-molestation, violent acts of all kinds. In a larger sense, when a lot of people get together and do unhappiness collectively, that's called terrorism. War.

Unhappiness expressed inside of ourselves is just as profoundly lethal. Whether it's hypertension, colitis, ulcers, all the different auto-immune diseases that could be triggered psychogenically—essentially what we're saying is that when we're in a state of disturbance inside of ourselves, we're actually interfering with the harmonious operation of our body and we're creating dis-ease or *lack of ease* which looks like illness and threatens our mortality.

So, when I think about the amount of disease that we see on the planet, then I'm encouraged to say that maybe what we really have to do now is look at alternatives. Most of the ways that we look at alternatives, Lois, is we try to legislate them. We try to make new rules. We try to make new laws. We try to make bigger prisons. We try to make stronger armies. We try to make sharper missiles. What we really don't deal with is reeducating people's attitudes.

Here at the Option Institute, that's really what we do with people who come from all around the world. Essentially, the answer doesn't seem to be the construct of laws, prisons and armies and wars. Really the answer might be to teach people how to be happier. Teach them how to be less reactive. Teach them to open their hearts to other people, even if people don't say and do what they want them to do. And I believe it's worth doing it one person at a time, if need be.

Example: We've adopted several little people and as a result, our family is now what you would call "multi-racial." Several years ago, one of my sons came home from school crying and I asked him what he was crying about. He said, "Today in school the kids said, 'nigger nose, nigger lips, dirty spic.'" So I looked at him in my quizzical way and I said, "Oh, why are you crying about that?" And then, my son said to me, "Well, doesn't that mean something is bad about me?" I said, "OK, well, why don't we have a discussion about that?"

I brought all the other children in who were here at the time—'cause we have six children—and we had this big discussion about that and I tried to teach them what we teach people in seminars: Words are only as powerful as you make them. If you believe those words, it means something about you. Sure, you're going to get excited, you're going to get upset. You're going to want to defend yourself. But if you decided that those words only means something about the speaker, *their* biases, *their* prejudices, *their* points of view, then in fact, you can get to know more about the speaker and maybe even find a place to be OK and loving of them as they are talking that way. So we had this incredibly lively discussion about whether that's possible or not.

About two weeks later, the same little guy comes back and he says to me, "Poppy, poppy, it really worked!" And I said, "What really worked?" He said, "Today in the school yard, kids called me those names again. Now I turned around and looked at them and suddenly realized, 'Oh, they're talking about themselves!' And I felt really good! And then guess what I did, Poppy?" And I said, "I have no idea, honey." He said, "I went up to them and said, 'My first name is Teo. If you call me by my first name, I could call you by your first name, and we could have a conversation.' I said, "Hey, that's sensational! What did the other boys do?" He said, "Nothing. They sort of just looked at me with their mouths open."

The point, though, is when he decided it meant something bad about himself, he made up that belief about it, gave himself a rather miserable experience and went running out of the school yard. When he found a way to see it in which he could be openhearted and not damage himself, he then gave himself a wonderful experience. And then, as a happier person, creatively became a force for social change. There was actually suggested to these youngsters another way they could interact.

So, to me, the answer to the massive unhappiness displayed in the form of all versions of violence, disrespect of people and the planet, is to really help people reeducate the beliefs through which they look at their lives and the world around them. This, ultimately, is more powerful than all the armies and prisons around the globe.

LG: I agree. Do you believe that anger can serve us?

BK: I think that's a personal one that each of us have to answer. By and large, in the people that I to talk to and work with, most of the time anger not only sounds like something that is damaging and violent as an interpersonal exchange, but oftentimes people walk away not feeling good, literally, in their bodies.

We had a man who took one of our workshops entitled "Happiness Is a Choice." One of the things he was dealing well with his wife, she would just get angry at him all the time—literally get angry at him for every little thing that he did. And he said, "And I respond by getting angry right back at her." So I asked him, "Why do you do that?" He looked at me incredulously and said, "Well if I didn't do it, I'd be some sort of woos or a doormat. I have to act that way!" I asked him why. Then he thought for a moment and he said, "I've never really thought about it except as a way to protect myself. But you know, as you ask me about it, when I get angry with my wife, I never, ever win the argument anyway. It only gives me extraordinary indigestion." So I said, "Okay, well, knowing that's what you get from it, do you want to continue to do it?" He paused for a moment, then said, "No. As a matter of fact, I'd like to do something completely different. Something you're teaching here in this program, which is making happiness or love the number one priority, let's say with my wife, no matter what." So I asked him, "How do you think you could do that?" And he said, "You know truthfully, I don't know. But I really want to create the intention and try."

Well, he finished the program, went home, actually returned about four or five days later, and told us a wondrous story. When he came home—he had been gone for a week, doing the seminar—he opened the door and his wife just started to barrage him angrily about the things that he didn't take care of before he left. He could feel the hair on the back of his neck bristle and then suddenly, he remembered his intention. So he walked over to her after she finished screaming and did something that was totally uncharacteristic. He took her hands, looked gently into her eyes and said, "Honey, nothing you do or say can diminish my love and my good feelings for you." Well, she looked at him and just went "Huh!" and ran out of the room. That evening she was yelling at him again. He took her hands again, looked into her eyes and said, "Honey, nothing you do or say can diminish my love or good feelings for you." He said, "Never in my life would I imagine using words like that, but I stayed with it," and by the third day his wife walked over to him and said, "Listen, buster, we have to talk." He said they had a very wondrous conversation. She said, "The first time you said it, I just wanted to strangle you. The second time, I still wanted to strangle you. But into the second and third day, I kept looking at you, marveling, no matter how outrageous I behaved, you were just so sweet, so gentle to me." And she said, "That really makes a difference." And he said, as a result they started to have a conversation that he felt was transformative, just in those few days of their relationship. So the lifelong belief that anger was a way to protect himself—to take care of himself—finally tries on a new suit of emotions and responses and he sees that the benefit from that far outweighs what he felt was the protection of using anger as a way to take care of himself.

"Happiness is about dropping judgments."

LG: I hear what you're saying, but many are skeptical of this "happiness is a choice" idea. Why do so many people resist even trying it?

BK: Well, I think it appears difficult because our educational process—whether it's our formal educational process or in the construct of family or even religious training—often the area of how we are going to feel about things, how we should feel about things, is viewed and taught us, as if it is outside of our control. There's something about that, oftentimes for people, that is a relief. "If I've been miserable for the last ten years, it's not my fault if I get angry at you and say awful things to you, I'm really out control. It's not my fault if I'm depressed, hopefully a doctor will find my biochemistry is a bit slanted, so I'm not even responsible for that." In some way, it gets us off the hook. But in the same breath, it is also a way to victimize ourselves, by seeing ourselves as not in control.

And then, if I do adopt this perspective, and that's all it is—a choice—then does that mean when I was angry yesterday, depressed last year, confused and doubtful four years ago, and fearful seven years ago, that I was doing it to myself? My thought is, it doesn't matter what I did yesterday. It only matters what you are doing right now, because right now is all you have. So if you decided to see it completely differently right now, then you create within yourself a completely different opportunity.

LG: Once again you're moving away from judgment and into what works.

BK: Right. What's happiness about? Happiness is about dropping judgments. We judge all the time. Essentially, we look at most of the circumstances in our lives through a filter that's really a question. When the stock market goes up or down, when our lover is sweet to us or not nice to us, when our boss gives us a raise or doesn't, when our children curse us or compliment us—in all those comparative situations, we're always thinking the essential question, "Is this good for me, or is this bad for me?" Most often people have learned to answer the question with a particular bias, seeing most of these things as problematic or bad for them. As a result, a lot of discomfort or unhappiness ensues.

However, if you taught yourself to see at least *opportunities* in all situations—in effect, answer that core question differently—then you could have completely different experiences. The judgment—bad, awful, terrible—is really what leads us to discomfort, distress and anxiety. So happiness is about dropping judgments.

Happiness is also about being present. All unhappiness is either a regret about the past or a worry to the future. We live so many days ahead of this moment. And if we could learn to stay in this moment, there are such amazing possibilities. Happiness is feeling and expressing gratitude.

For more information about the Options Institute in Sheffield, MA, call 800-714-2779. Bears' latest book is entitled, Outsmarting Your Karma, 1996, *Epic Century Publishers, 800-562-7171.*

In the same December issue of the Self-Health Newsletter *from which the interview above appeared was the following editorial by Lois Grasso. Her comments on Bears' ideas seemed to me well worth reprinting.*

Choosing Tolerance

Barry Neil Kaufman says we can choose to be happy at any given moment by changing our decisions about whether external happenings are good for us or not. Laurie Pearlman and Jeanne Folks say it's important to acknowledge painful feelings and situations and to be supportive of each other's woundedness, especially during the holidays when happiness is not available to many.

I say, take what you need and leave the rest! Both points of view are valid for different people at different times in their lives. If you are in the process of digging deep into the dirt (as Peter Gabriel puts it) to uncover the subconscious blocks and cellular memories of traumatic experiences, the idea of choosing happiness may seem like "pie-in-the-sky." Or maybe it's just what you need to get unstuck from unhappy feelings that can tend to engulf your entire being when you focus on them too much.

Gail Petrowsky made a very good point at our Celestine Adventure Weekend. She said, "I get angry and I get sad sometimes. And when I do, I give myself full permission to *really* get into it—for an hour. I set aside a specific amount of time. I get into it and then I'm done." I like that approach. It includes a healthy dose of self-acceptance, keeps you out of denial, and doesn't feed the victim role. At the same time, she's acknowledging her ability to respond to any situation—and her responsibility to choose.

For me, as publisher and editor of this publication, it is my responsibility to choose articles which represent a diverse variety of perspectives on self-healing. And one of the bottom lines, I think, is tolerance—acceptance of ourselves and others exactly as we are now—without losing the higher perspective of who we can choose to be in the next moment. I believe that defines true responsibility.

And let's face it: aren't most of the world's problems today the result of irresponsibility? When people disown their ability to respond, they are trying to force others to take on the responsibility for them. Think about any scenario that upsets you. Who is blaming whom? And how would the situation change if they both stopped blaming each other and started to acknowledge and apply their ability to respond to each other? Indeed, how would the world change if we all did so?

—Lois Grasso, editor/publisher

The Self-Health Networker *(c/o Network Communications, Inc., 80 Whiting St., Plainville, CT 06062, Tel. 860-793-9707, Fax -9738) is, in its own words, "a monthly newsmagazine dedicated to supporting greater health, awareness, and growth into new paradigms of thought and behavior. Since 1991, its primary purpose has been to support and encourage families and individuals in the process of healing physically, emotionally, and spiritually, so that they may expand into higher levels of personal and social responsibility. We strive to inform, educate, and inspire attitudes and policies which support solutions rather than attempt to fight problems."*

And here's an article from "our" Chris. Over the years we have been publishing Chris' articles in ΣΚΟΛΕ, and so, this one is no exception! It is, however, special, not just because it's a good one, but because our local newspaper, The Times Union, *paid Chris $50 for it—a first!—which makes him an official author!*

Even more telling, Chris' book, Making It Up As We Go Along, *from which numerous articles have appeared in these pages, has been accepted for publication by Heineman—which is a major educational publishing house! It'll be some time before it comes out, but it's officially on the assembly line! Way to go, Chris!*

A School Must Have A Heart

by Chris Mercogliano

It happens every year. Yesterday we received a visit from two former students, a brother and a sister. Nothing unusual here, except for the fact that these were not *our* former students. Instead they were graduates of the old Saint Anthony's School, which for many years occupied the same handsome, Italianate-style building on Elm Street now belonging to the Free School.

Before going on with the story, a word about the building's unusual history is in order: It actually appeared first as a Lutheran church, built in the 1860s by German immigrants, newcomers who quickly prospered and moved west to form what is now known as Albany's Pine Hills section. A subsequent wave of Italian immigrants then bought the church and converted it into their parish school in 1909. When the South End's Italian-American population reached its zenith in the 1950s, Saint Anthony's built a new school around the corner and the old building was converted again, this time into an Italian-American community center. Following a general exodus of its members throughout the 1960s, the center sold the building in 1971 to our founder, Mary Leue, who was looking for a larger space for the rapidly growing educational alternative she had started in her home two years earlier.

The two aforementioned Saint Anthony's alumni, in their mid- to late-forties, are the youngest to return since we have had the building. Last year it was two elderly sisters in their eighties. I always consider it a great blessing to be there to witness the look of returning wonder overtake their faces as these visitors travel back through decades in an instant. Inevitably, they all gaze upwards when they enter the building's second floor, still with its 18-foot high ceilings—one of the few remaining vestiges of the original church. There's something about that arching back of the neck which seems to intensify the effect.

Just what was it that had called them back?

Partly, I think, because these most recent visitors were so close to me in age, our conversation soon meandered beyond the usual pleasantries and reminiscences. This time I felt compelled to wonder out loud *why* they had decided to return to their old elementary school. I know I've never really considered revisiting mine, a public one in Northwest Washington, D.C. Just what was it that had called them back?

While we were talking a sketchy parallel began to form in my mind. Twenty-seven years-old at this point, the Free School now receives numerous visits from its former students, and there appears to be no end in sight to the Saint Anthony's alumni. So here we have more than an incidental number of individuals returning to visit two very dissimilar types of schools with little more in common than the occupation of the same interior. Fascinating, as Mr. Spock used to say in the original Star Trek episodes.

I generally feel as though I know why most Free School kids come back, probably since I taught most of them at one time or another. But what about the old Saint Anthony's students? With them I was never so sure, until this time when I finally decided to ask.

Frank, leading his sister who is struggling with MS, came quickly to the point. He said that his *alma mater*, then run by a hard-nosed Irish priest named Father O'Connor and a cadre of sisters who generally meant business, wasn't perfect by any means. But it was, above all else, a place where he felt cared about, even loved sometimes; somewhere he knew he belonged. To sum it all up in a word, Frank reflected, it was a school which had a heart. This is the detail he will never forget.

And it is precisely why our alumni return. The Free School is imperfect, too; we do better with some kids than with others. But when they revisit, and a great many do, it is because of the way that the school once opened its heart to them. And vice versa. Always an even exchange.

This investment of mutual concern which invokes such permanent connection can't be measured in test scores or after-college income. In Latin it's known as *caritas*. In the Free School's lexicon it is the wellspring of all true learning. Yes, the mind is important but the heart must always come first, meaning that, for openers, we simply learn to care about each other. Everything else to do with good education, while certainly important, is considered secondary.

Again and again we have observed how much more easily the learning tasks associated with the three Rs and beyond will flow when this first step has been properly taken. And I suspect that somewhere underneath all the strictness and order of the old Saint Anthony's—a poor neighborhood school just like ours—the same was once true.

Which is why, year in and year out, so many graduates of both schools elect to rejoin us briefly for that little heart jog back through time.

Read what one of our reviewers says about
The Journal of Family Life

From: *New Age Journal's Sourcebook for 1996:*

THE EDITORS of *The Journal of Family Life: A Quarterly for Empowering Families* know that family life embraces a whole range of emotions and relationships from birth to death. Each 64-page issue focuses on a theme related to family life—couples, children, grandparents, in-laws, culturespirituality, money. Although interviews with the likes of *Soul* man Thomas Moore, midwife Ina May Gaskin, and educator John Taylor Gatto spice up the mix, most of the articles are written by regular people sharing their thoughts and experiences. Reading this grassroots *Journal*—which is dedicated to the idea that social change starts with family change—is a bit like having a conversation with wise and interesting neighbors, who admit both their failures and their successes in hopes of lending a helping hand.

72 Philip St., Albany NY 12202; (518) 432-1578. Quarterly; $20/year; a sustaining subscription ($30) includes a year's free subscription to *SKOLE*.

Montessori & Steiner:
A Pattern of Reverse Symmetries
by Dee Joy Coulter

This article, [which *we* came across in the July-August, 1996, issue of Living Education, the Journal of Oak Meadow School] *is reprinted from Holistic Education Review, 39 Pearl St., Brandon, VT 05733 1007 (802) 247-8312. Published quarterly, annual subscriptions are $26.*

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What a pleasure it was to read the open and tender dialogue between four wonderful Montessori and Waldorf educators (*Holistic Education Review,* Winter 1990). I have cherished both movements for years. I helped found the Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado, and have worked with the Montessori movement during the past five years as well. It has been a delicate business, straddling the fence with these two dear friends. Each kindly granted me an exemption, agreeing to overlook that I was also befriending the other in my spare time. Nonetheless, I rarely saw openings for sharing the wonders of one movement with the other.

For a long time I held each movement in separate compartments in my heart and my head, considering the paradox of how they could both be so sound, so "right"—and so different. Then, one day I was attending a lecture at the Naropa Institute, a Buddhist-inspired college in Boulder that is my third dear friend, and where I love most to teach. Dr. Jeremy Hayward commented that the Buddhists regard wisdom (basic goodness) and skillful means (right action) as the two wings of the dove. All of the Eastern parallels tumbled through my mind then, the feminine and masculine principles, the yin and the yang, and the way each contains the other in seed form.

In that state of mind I thought again about my paradox: How could it be that Montessori and Steiner (founder of the Waldorf

Schools) made sense, not as mere halves of what could be a good system if only put together, but as wholes themselves? Suddenly I saw these two inspired leaders and their movements as a pattern of reverse symmetries. I would like to describe some of these patterns here.

Rudolf Steiner began his spiritual activities with the Theosophical Society, eventually breaking away to form his own movement, which he called anthroposophy. Whereas Steiner's affiliation with theosophy occurred early in his life, Maria Montessori's happened late in hers. She was visiting in India when World War II broke out and prevented her from returning to Italy. She was interned in Adyar, India, for six years and forced to slow her busy life to the tempo of that Indian city—which just happened to house the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society.

It was also this war experience that drew Montessori to press for peace education above all else. War played a vital role in drawing forth Steiner's vision, too, although it was the aftermath of World War I in his case. Steiner was asked by Emil Molt, owner of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, to devise an approach to education that could serve both the children of the workers and the management, and work toward reuniting a culture torn by war and class differences.

War brought about Steiner's initial invitation to participate in the formalization of an educational philosophy, and it brought to Montessori a deeper spiritualization of work already well underway. Her work in education had begun with children in the Italian ghettos, children who would have been destined to find no niches in society without her dramatic interventions.

There are other reverse symmetries as well. Steiner, a male in a masculine country at the end of a very masculine act of war, was asked to instill the feminine principle of honoring the basic goodness and inner wisdom of the child by reintroducing the arts and reawakening the heart forces. In contrast, Montessori, a female in a feminine country already infused with the arts, offered disenfranchised children the masculine service of enculturation, apprising them of the environmental niches in society and building up skillful means in them so that they could take their place in the society. Whereas Steiner worked to rekindle the imaginations of overly hardened children, Montessori worked to diminish the excessive imaginative life of children who used that realm as an escape from a reality they couldn't grasp. She strove to "normalize" them, to bring their practical activities and their imaginations into proper balance.

Symmetries in Curriculum

Many curricular elements of the two approaches have the same reasonable oppositions as well. Montessori would first introduce the manifested forms of the greatest mathematicians to the children—Platonic solids, Pythagorean geometric forms—and later introduce biographies and the ideas behind the forms. Steiner would ask his teachers to introduce the wonder of sacred number principles, the biographies of the mathematicians, and the spiritual quests of their day before introducing the forms. Waldorf education reintroduces the questions so that the child can personally generate the spiritual quests that led to the answers, and then shows them what the culture has developed. Montessori education invites the child to reverence the answers last, the wonders of human cultural deeds, and then to progress to the seed elements of the finest of our manifested works.

Each educator's work must be understood as a response to the specific needs of a particular culture and historical period.

Montessori would have the children discover geographical spaces and their spatial relationships early, to see how geography reveals our cultural interconnectedness. It is not uncommon for Montessori children in the early grades to raise money to preserve Brazilian rain forests, for example. Steiner, on the other hand, would start with the local environment and gradually work outward in spiral to reach astronomy by grade 12, but he would reverse the spiral for history. In history, the child would begin with fairy tales, legends, and myths, then work on through Biblical and ancient recorded history to current events in grade 12. Steiner would pace this historical journey to match the unfolding consciousness of the developing child. The Golden Age of Greece, for example, would be addressed during grade 5, when children are their most sensitive about fairness, and newly able to become a democratic society themselves.

This thread of masculine and feminine voices also arose in the interview in *Holistic Education Review*. The Montessori voices spoke more of materials, environment, structure, building, play exercise, concepts, specificity, order and practicality. These words are used to describe our formed world, and to construct our world. The Waldorf voices spoke of delicate processes, essence, aspects, rhythm, feeling elements, context, imagination, and beauty. These words are used to describe our inner life and the artistic nuances of the world as it is. However, each movement is more than a polarity, for each holds the other at its core. Montessori offers the enculturating gesture with the ultimate hope that children so nourished will then go forth able to bring about peace in the world. This is a very feminine goal, calling for inner transformations. Steiner proposed his inner approach with the ultimate hope that the children so nourished would then go forth in freedom to contribute to the further development of the culture. In recent history, this has been largely a masculine activity.

When I am with Waldorf teachers, I witness their feeling of isolation and inner exhaustion. For them, a sense of context in the world would be a good tonic. When I am with Montessori teachers, I witness their feeling of overwhelmed compassion for the chaotic conditions of the world. For them, a sense of inner spiritual renewal would be an equally good tonic.

Both of these paths are brilliant, full of compassion and honoring of the child. And each path has the same obligation that faces every individual in these times. We can no longer afford, nor accept, a gender-based constraint on our ways of service; we must work to bring ourselves into balance in life. Both of these paths are at their best when their practitioners strive to explore the seed qualities within their movement. Montessori spoke eloquently of the spiritual embryo of the child and the spiritual preparation of the teacher. Those teachers would do well to study her later works and include within the clear forms a bit more of the mystery that Maria Montessori also says is important. Conversely, Steiner sought teachers who had rich practical life experiences, to model for children ways to be in the world. Those teachers would do well to step out into the world more often—to see what other schools are doing, what children in other settings are like, how faculties elsewhere work with conflict, and how today's outer science could and would support their spiritual insights.

These actions would be so nourishing for the teachers themselves. When I am with Waldorf teachers, I witness their feeling of isolation and inner exhaustion. For them, a sense of context in the world would be a good tonic. When I am with Montessori teachers, I witness their feeling of overwhelmed compassion for the chaotic conditions of the world. For them, a sense of inner spiritual renewal would be an equally good tonic. One thing is clear. The children need them both. Each brings a high level of love and caring and a path through childhood vitally needed by children today.

Oak Meadow School, run by Directors Bonnie and Lawrence Williams, is a lively and evidently highly successful homeschooling resource center that offers all sorts of support programs by mail for homeschooling families, including a number of courses families can buy for their children.

It has recently moved from Blacksburg, VA to Putney, VT (PO Box 740, Putney, VT 05346), and seems to have survived the move in style.

The newsletter, Living Education, *from which the above article by Dee Coulter was taken, is edited by Judy Britton from Temecula, CA, and is an attractive, interesting publication which includes articles, stories, poems and drawings by adults and children alike. It comes out 6x a year and costs $18 for a year's subscription. You may contact Judy at 30030 La Primavera, Temecula, CA 92593 (e-mail 76702.2643@compuserve.com)*

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Grades K-12

And here is a poignant article by our New Mexico buddy Bill Kaul, who spends a lot of time with people who hurt or are otherwise not highly regarded by our culture. Not your most lucrative lifestyle! It takes a stout heart and a lot of harnessed rage, both of which Bill has! Hang in, Bill! The ultimate compensation is finding your true craft, which is the art of writing, as Chris has discovered. I am proud to publish you early and avoid the crowds.

On Conflict Resolution

by Dr. Billious Kaul

PO Box 698, Waterflow, NM 87421

Is it just me, or are there an awful lot of conflicts going on?

By now the modes of dealing with conflict, as a model and as a practice, are fairly well known and in use (à la the Thomas Killman inventory; e.g.). Many of us perhaps have been given some training in what these modes look like in use and theory: "Resolving Conflict in the Workplace"; "Conflict Resolution in the Schools"; e.g.

They are, as I understand them, Avoidance, Confrontation, Compromise and Cooperation. Briefly, their characteristics may be described as follows:

1. Avoidance—as implied, this mode involves not facing the situation, with or without denial that a conflict exists; one may be aware of the conflict and be so uncomfortable with it (due to social training) that the best option seems to be to ignore or stay away from the source of conflict.

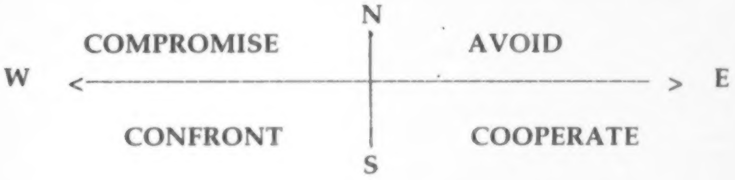
2. Confrontation—this mode typifies, at one level or another, most of our social interactions in modern America This is also called the "win-lose" mode since the nature of conflict handled in this manner is resolved leaving a winner and a loser in clear roles. One of my mentors, Sherrie Gradin, traces this mode in social and academic rhetoric by noting that "rhetorics of dissent" (winning or losing arguments) are much more valued than "rhetorics of assent" (dialog toward finding cooperation). Winners are valued in our society, whether they win arguments, fights, the girl, or a corporate battle.

3. Compromise—also known as the "lose-lose" mode, because each party involved in the conflict gives up a little something in the hopes of gaining something else more valuable (i.e., an end to the conflict). This mode is often seen as being more pragmatic than cooperation and less destructive than confrontation because of its implied "truce" mechanism. If either side reneges on the agreement to give up their portion, confrontation is a usual result; but cooperation is unrealistic. People can be forced to compromise, but is it then really compromise? Or, forced to confront, forced to avoid, forced to cooperate...?

4. Cooperation—both parties discover that there is a shared or common need or interest or goal and agree to work together (often with a third party) to achieve this goal, meet this need, or serve this interest.

At least that's how I was taught about these things.

The form they are put in sometimes fits along a curve of most common types employed by a particular person or institutional entity, or sometimes fits in a fourfold matrix something like this:



We are then told, and most of us find in practice, that the most common types employed in our society are, in descending order, as follows:

1. Confrontation (most common and valued—in practice if not theory)
2. Avoidance
3. Compromise
4. Cooperation (least common and valued; valued in practice, that is. It gets lip service.)

We live in a society governed by competition, and competition leads to confrontation by its nature or avoidance of conflict by its natural abhorrence. We are further told that various personality types and gender models determine to some extent our preferred modes of handling conflict. Women prefer cooperation and must live in compromise, and men prefer confrontation, or, in the case of wimps and "sociopaths," avoidance.

This is interesting to me for a number of reasons, and in this little discussion on paper I will explain why... but please bear in mind that logic is not my strong suit; my mind goes where it will, and I can only leave signs and pointers should you choose to follow. (Should you choose not to, you will miss a cool trip.)

What if?: What if society was truly structured along lines of cooperation? Would hierarchies as we know them be possible? If two people are striving mutually for the same goal, then wouldn't conflict arise if one was paid more than the other in the pursuit of that same goal? E.F. Schumacher, in the book he wrote after *Small Is Beautiful,* called *Good Work,* describes a company where workers strive together to make a product, a company where, since all strive together equally to achieve a goal (the product, or, satisfied customers), all are paid equally and have equal power in decision-making. Leaders arise from within the cooperative, and are only trusted servants of the cooperative as a whole.

If someone's goals change and they cannot any longer in good conscience serve the cooperative, then they must find another goal to cooperate with, another group to achieve... but what if there's conflict between groups of cooperatives.? Can they, in turn, find a larger goal to cooperate in achieving.? Will there be an ultimate goal? What would that be? (An ultimate goal as a world vision?) A mega-tribe? A cooperative of diverse cooperatives?

I guess the point is, our interactions in school and work and society are not governed by our most typical mode of dealing with conflicts. We might use any number of them more or less—but our school, our work, our society governs our modes: we use that mode of conflict resolution that most closely fits what is allowed, valued and set up as a norm in our social environment, OR, we interpret the mode being used to fit.

In our natural environment, what mode is most common in dealing with conflict? How do various animals react in various ecosystems? How do animals react in an ecosystem terribly out of balance? What is your, my, our ecosystem doing to escalate conflict and also distort our modes of dealing with it?

Nietzsche said, "There are no facts, only interpretations."

(but is that a fact, Fritz?)

ASIDE: I recall working many years ago in a residential facility— I won't call it a home—for the severely mentally disabled (called them "retarded") run by the State of Alabama (although any state would probably be about the same, or worse). In this facility, there were all kinds of adults, kids, males and females with physical disabilities and abilities mixed with strange and terrifying or wonderful mental activities. I recall one kid in particular, whom I'll call "Bart." Bart was a young African-American, maybe seventeen or so, and he was all arms and legs going in windmills as he walked. When he wasn't walking, fully stopped, he was very still... until something in his brain said "Go!" and he would be off again, making his dancing, whirling way across floors, over couches and chairs and tables and other residents, until his brain said "Stop!" Bart was very cute and little. Everybody wanted to hug him. But, if you hugged him, he would bite you and Boom! off again... So he didn't get very many hugs except from behind... Bart also loved to eat junk food: Twinkies, cream pies, Ding Dongs, chips, cookies, Moon Pies, you name it.

The facility was not allowed to lock a resident's windows by court order, (I forget why; fire danger or something, I dunno), so some of the more mobile residents, Bart especially, would occasionally make an escape. Most were quickly apprehended, even on my shift (the late night shift, "graveyard") because the place was about a hundred feet from this highway but behind a big copse of trees and bushes and most residents would stop in the trees before they ever made it to the highway (no fence). Across the highway was a 7-11 full of junk food.

Bart was taken there once by a staff member on an outing. Bart loved junk food. Bart remembered. One evening, not my shift, thankfully, Bart went out the window and across the highway and next thing we got a call, "Hey, goddammit, one of your loonies is over here, some wild black kid, sitting in the middle of my floor eating everything he can grab. Come get him and pay up!"—and so my colleague told me, he went over there and pulled Bart out of a pile of chip bags and pretzel crumbs and creme filling and took him back and washed him off and put him to bed.

Now, Bart couldn't look you in the eye; his eyes were like his arms and legs, going everywhere and usually up—but my colleague on the evening shift said he was sure smiling when he put him to bed. This happened several more times over the next few weeks and Bart was running up quite a bill at the 7-11 and the manager was getting quite perturbed.

One night I came in and noticed right away Bart wasn't there. "Oh, no...!" I said. Where's Bart? (I was ready to run across the highway.) Oh, he's dead, the evening shift said. Got killed today after toothbrush training, running across the highway. Car hit him. END OF ASIDE.

Now how could Bart cooperate? Compromise? Avoid conflict or deal with it at all, in any mode? He could: a) single-mindedly pursue what he wanted, b) ignore conflict while he simply ran over it with his gangly flailing body, c) be forced to obey, for his own good, d) be forced to cooperate, again for his own good, and so on... ultimately, though, Bart's desires and the travail involved in gratifying them killed him! This because of lack of restraint....

But whose? To be forced to cooperate. This implies an unwillingness or inability to do so voluntarily... Bart was certainly unable and/or unwilling... and Bart was a mirror of many of us... Bart was coping with desire and did not know how to function in a world that requires money for goodies, understanding for success, and locked windows... stores and highways and courts and cars, manufacturers of chips and creme pies.... workers in state institutions (client/staff ratio often 10:1)... the people who worked most closely with the residents and worked the oddest, most difficult hours the poorest paid, the psychologists making big bucks to teach Bart how to brush his teeth (well, actually, to teach the technicians how to teach Bart to brush his teeth).... and Lord knows that was a skill Bart needed, as much sugar and grease as he ate...

Y'know, I think of Bart sometimes when I eat a Twinkie or brush my teeth.

Court. Yeah, court.... the place of confrontation. Confronted with your crimes, laid in the scale... two sides argue, do battle, confront the evidence and one another, and eventually along comes the end: case closed. Won or lost. One side or the other. Appeal... maybe. Then win or lose the appeal...

The metaphysics of confrontation: I will fight the Devil and if I win I will go to heaven; God is on our side (hence, we will win and the bad guys will lose—the chief evidence that they are bad being the fact that they lost); I will trust God because God always wins, he has already fought the battle against sin and won; etc.)

The metaphysics of avoidance: God? Goddess? Death? Meaning of life? I don't want to talk about it. I got all this stuff in Sunday school. Pass the bottle. Pass the joint. Pass the credit card, creme pie, chips.... we'll talk about it later...

The metaphysics of compromise: OK, God, if you'll just give me—, then I promise I'll always/never do—.

The metaphysics of cooperation: OK, Force of the Universe, I guess we both want the same things (special or not?).... so how about if we work together? OR: OK, God, I'll work with these folks to achieve this thing if you'll guide us.... OR, etc.

And the politics of confrontation... and the epistemology of confrontation... and the ontology of confrontation, and avoidance and compromise and so forth... perhaps snapshots of an overcrowded city governed by greed, lust and avarice will show us the conflict ecology of humanity... is ecofeminism cooperative? Is masculine ecology in conflict, striving to win?

Excluded middle. Jonathan Kozol visiting the rich kids' school in *Savage Inequalities* and discovering that they are learning higher-order logic... to see who is the smartest.? To see who can cooperate best? To lay bare the thinking of the poor?

Poor in conflict with rich and vice versa... each cooperating with the compadres in order to keep what they got or get ... or what they ain't got yet...

VERY COMPLEX THING, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, WHEN CARRIED AFIELD... but by golly, does it work?

> To [Francisco] Ferrer, however, state education was as noxious as that of the church. For state and church alike sought to keep out new ideas that might undermine the status quo. "Rulers have always taken care to control the education of the people," he declared. "They know better than anyone else that their power is based almost entirely on the school, and they therefore insist on retaining their monopoly on it."
>
> —Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*

If this one doesn't give you nostalgic goose bumps, you are surely "dead to wonder and surprise!" Or have lost your memory of the sixties! Which I hope isn't true! It came to us from Bob Kay, MD., from Philadelphia. Yes, Virginia, there once was a Saturday Evening Post*! Even when I was a kid, there was always the SEP—and I turned seventy-seven on the 21st of December! And even more difficult to believe, the SEP published John Holt! This one is vintage Holt! Enjoy! And thanks again, Bob!*

School is Bad For Children

by John Holt

Taken from the SEP for February 8, 1969

Almost every child on the first day he sets foot in a school building is smarter, more curious, less afraid of what he doesn't know, better at finding and figuring things out, more confident, resourceful, persistent and independent than he will ever be again in his schooling—or, unless he is very unusual and very lucky, for the rest of his life. Already, by paying close attention to and interacting with the world and people around him, and without any school-type formal instruction, he has done a task far more difficult, complicated and abstract than anything he will be asked to do in school, or than any of his teachers has done for years. He has solved the mystery of language. He has discovered it—babies don't even know that language exists—and he has found out how it works and learned to use it. He has done it by exploring, by experimenting, by developing his own model or the grammar of language, by trying it out and seeing whether it works, by gradually changing it and refining it until it does work. And while he has been doing this, he has been learning other things as well, including many of the "concepts" that the schools think only they can teach him, and many that are more complicated than the ones they do try to teach him.

In he comes, this curious, patient, determined, energetic, skillful learner. we sit him down at a desk, and what do we teach him? Many things. First, that learning is separate from living. "You come to school to learn," we tell him, as if the child hadn't been learning before, as if living were out there and learning were in here, and there were no connection between the two. Secondly, that he cannot be trusted to learn and is no good at it. Everything we teach about reading, a task far simpler than many that the child has already mastered, says to him, "If we don't make you read, you won't, and if you don't do it exactly the way we tell you, you can't." In short, he comes to feel that learning is a passive process, something that someone else does to you, instead of something you do for yourself.

In a great many other ways he learns that he is worthless, untrustworthy, fit only to take other people's orders, a blank sheet for other people to write on. Oh, we make a lot of nice noises in school about respect for the child and individual differences, and the like. But our acts, as opposed to our talk, say to the child, "Your experience, your concerns, your curiosities, your needs, what you know, what you want, what you wonder about, what you hope for, what you fear, what you like and dislike, what you are good at or not so good at—all this is of not the slightest importance, it counts for nothing. What counts here, and the only thing that counts, is what we know, what we think is important, what we want you to do, think and be." The child soon learns not to ask questions—the teacher isn't there to satisfy his curiosity. Having learned to hide his curiosity, he later learns to be ashamed of it. Given no chance to find out who he is—and to develop that person, whoever it is—he soon comes to accept the adults' evaluation of him.

He learns many other things. He learns that to be wrong, uncertain, confused, is a crime. Right Answers are what the school wants, and he learns countless strategies for prying these answers out of the teacher, for conning her into thinking he knows what he doesn't know. He learns to dodge, bluff, fake, cheat. He learns to be lazy. Before he came to school, he would work for hours on end, on his own, with no thought of reward, at the business of making sense of the world and gaining competence in it. In school he learns, like every buck private, how to goldbrick, how not to work when the sergeant isn't looking, how to know when he is looking, how to make him think you are working even when he is looking. He learns that in real life you don't do anything unless you are bribed, bullied or conned into doing it, that nothing is worth doing for its own sake, or that if it is, you can't do it in school. He learns to be bored, to work with a small part of his mind, to escape from the reality around him into daydreams and fantasies—but not like the fantasies of his preschool years, in which he played a very active part.

The child comes to school curious about other people, particularly other children, and the school teaches him to be indifferent.

The most interesting thing in the classroom—often the only interesting thing in it—is the other children, but he has to act as if these other children, all about him., only a few feet away, are not really there. He cannot interact with them, talk with them, smile at them. In many schools he can't talk to other children in the halls between classes; in more than a few, and some of these in stylish suburbs, he can't even talk to them at lunch. Splendid training for a world in which, when you're not studying the other person to figure out how to do him in, you pay no attention to him.

In fact, he learns how to live without paying attention to anything going on around him. You might say that school is a long lesson in how to turn yourself off, which may be one reason why so many young people, seeking the awareness of the world and responsiveness to it they had when they were little and think they can only find it in drugs. Aside from being boring, the school is almost always ugly, cold, inhuman—even the most stylish, glass-windowed, $20-a square-foot schools.

And so, in this dull and ugly place where nobody ever says anything very truthful, where everybody is playing a kind of role, as in a charade, where the teachers are no more free to respond honestly to the students than the students are free to respond to the teachers or each other, where the air practically vibrates with suspicion and anxiety, the child learns to live in a daze, saving his energies for those small parts of his life that are too trivial for the adults to bother with, and thus remain his. It is a rare child who can come through this schooling with much left of his curiosity, his independence or his sense of his own dignity, competence and worth.

So much for criticism. What do we need to do? Many things. Some are easy—we can do them right away. Some are hard and may take some time. Take a hard one first. We should abolish compulsory school attendance. At the very least we should modify it perhaps by giving children every year a large number of authorized absences. Our compulsory school-attendance laws once served a humane and useful purpose. They protected children's right to some schooling, against those adults who would otherwise have denied it to them in order to exploit their labor, in farm, store, mine or factory. Today the laws help nobody, not the schools, not the teachers, not the children. To keep kids in school who would rather not be there costs the schools an enormous amount of time and trouble to say nothing of what it costs to repair the damage that these angry and resentful prisoners do every time they get a chance. Every teacher knows that any kid in class who, for whatever reason, would rather not be there not only doesn't learn anything himself but makes it a great deal tougher for anyone else. As for protecting the children from exploitation, the chief and indeed only exploiters of children these days are the schools. Kids caught in the college rush more often than not work seventy hours or more a week, most of it on paper busy work. For kids who aren't going to college, school is just a useless timewaster, preventing them from earning some money or doing some useful work, or even doing some true learnings.

Objections. "If kids didn't have to go to school, they'd all be out in the streets!" No, they wouldn't. In the first place, even if schools stayed just the way they are, children would spend at least some time there because that's where they'd be likely to find friends; it's a natural meeting place for children. In the second place, schools wouldn't stay the way they are, they'd get better, because we would have to start making them what they ought to be right now—places where children would want to be. In the third place, those children who did not want to go to school could find, particularly if we stirred up our brains and gave them a little help, other things to do—the things many children now do during their summers and holidays.

There's something easier we could do. We need to get kids out of the school buildings, give them a chance to learn about the world at first hand. It is a very recent idea, and a crazy one, that the way to teach our young people about the world they live in is to take them out of it and shut them up in brick boxes. Fortunately, educators are beginning to realize this. In Philadelphia and Portland, Oregon, to pick only two places I happen to have heard about, plans are being drawn up for public schools that won't have any school buildings at all, that will take the students out into the city and help them to use it and its people as a learning resource. In other words, students, perhaps in groups, perhaps independently, will go to libraries, museums, exhibits, courtrooms, legislatures, radio and TV stations, meetings, businesses and laboratories to learn about their world and society at first hand. A small private school in Washington is already doing this. It makes sense. We need more of it.

As we help children get out into the world, to do their learning there, we can get more of the world into the schools. Aside from their parents, most children never have any close contact with any adults except people whose sole business is children. No wonder they have no idea what adult life or work is like. We need to bring a lot more people who are not full-time teachers into the schools, and into contact with the children. In New York City, under the Teachers and Writers Collaborative, real writers, working writers come into the schools, read their work and talk to the children about the problems of their craft. The children eat it up. In another school I know of, a practicing attorney from a nearby city comes in every month or so and talks to several classes about the law. Not the law as it is in books but as he sees it and encounters it in his cases, his problems, his work. And the children love it. It is real, grown-up, true, not *Weekly Reader*, not "social studies," not lies and baloney.

Something easier yet. Let children work together, help each other, learn from each other and each other's mistakes. We now know, from the experience of many schools both rich-suburban and poor-city, that children are often the best teachers of other children. What is more important, we know that when a fifth-or sixth-grader who has been having trouble with reading starts helping a first grader, his own reading sharply improves. A number of schools are beginning to use what some call Paired Learning. This means that you let children form partnerships with other children, do their work, even including their tests, together, and share whatever marks or results this work gets—just like grownups in the real world. It seems to work.

Let the children learn to judge their own work. A child learning to talk does not learn by being corrected all the time; if corrected too much, he will stop talking, He compares, a thousand times a day, the difference between language as he uses it and as those around him use it. Bit by bit, he makes the necessary changes to make his language like other people's. In the same way, kids learning to do all the other things they learn without adult teachers—to walk, run, climb, whistle, ride a bike, skate, play games, jump rope—compare their own performance with what more skilled people do, and slowly make the needed changes.

But in school we never give a child a chance to detect his mistakes, let alone correct them. We do it all for him. We act as if we thought he would never notice a mistake unless it was pointed out to him, or correct it unless he was made to. Soon he becomes dependent on the expert. We should let him do it himself. Let him figure out, with the help of other children if he wants it, what this word says, what is the answer to that problem, whether this is a good way of saying or doing this or that. If right answers are involved, as in some math or science, give him the answer book, let him correct his own papers. Why should we teachers waste time on such donkey work? Our job should be to help the kid when he to measure his own understanding, how to know what he knows or does not know.

We could also abolish the fixed, required curriculum. People remember only what is interesting and useful to them, what helps them make sense of the world, or helps them get along in it. All else they quickly forget, if they ever learn it at all. The idea of a "body of knowledge," to be picked up in school and used for the rest of one's life, is nonsense in a world as complicated and rapidly changing as ours. Anyway, the most important questions and problems of our time are not in the curriculum, not even in the hotshot universities, let alone the schools.

Children want, more than they want anything else, and even after years of miseducation, to make sense of the world, themselves, other human beings. Let them get at this job, with our help if they ask for it, in the way that makes most sense to them.

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Newswatch:

This newspaper article was brought to my attention by one of my racially and politically savvy buddies. It comes from the local daily that used to be called The Schenectady Gazette, *the name change evidently conciding with their decision to upgrade their readability!*
William Raspberry is a nationally syndicated columnist who writes about political and social issues.

From: *The Daily Gazette* **January 14, 1997.**

Blacks still ambivalent about America

by William Raspberry

"We must delight in each other, make each other's condition our own, rejoice together, mourn together and suffer together.... We must be knit together as one. "—John Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts.

Can Americans "be knit together as one"—as distinct and as united as a patchwork quilt? Or is it more likely that we'll come unraveled, each group pulling against the others? Who are we? The questions constitute one of the crucial issues facing us at the end of the 20th century, and they lie behind a fascinating effort on the part of the National Endowment for the Humanities: an attempt to launch a national conversation on American identity. The idea goes back at least to 1993 when NEH chairman Sheldon Hackney proposed "a national conversation open to all Americans, a conversation in which all voices are heard and in which we grapple seriously with the meaning of American pluralism."

The difficulties such a conversation might entail were revealed the other night when a racially mixed audience of several hundred saw a film—"Talk to Me: Americans in Conversation"—commissioned by the Endowment expressly to get us talking. But the conversation that followed—much like Andrea Simon's 60-minute film—was more a collection of personal, often deeply moving, vignettes than a discussion of anything in particular. Still the question intrigues. Can Americans be knit together?

Much of the film we saw the other night suggests "yes." Americans of various origins talked with great feeling about their family origins in Sweden or Italy or Russia or Japan and how they now have been transmuted into an American race. Even American Indians and Hispanics acknowledged some sense of this transformation. But the black Americans (apart from the few among the experts who sought to give the film continuity) seemed trapped in discussion of all their problems.

I suspect this disjunction was more the fault of the filmmaker than anything else— like a school treating Black history as a once-a-year addendum rather than as an integral part of American history. Anyway, when white people come at us to talk about pluralism, we naturally expect they want to hear about our problems, about how left out we feel. We do feel left out. And many of us have come to see our outsideness as permanent. That, all by itself, affects the conversation.

I came of age during a period when Martin Luther King's dream of inclusion was the norm, when we still hoped that the country could somehow surmount race and become the America it wanted to believe it was destined to be. I'm still there. But many, many of us are not—and for good reason. To keep hoping that America will rise above race is to keep being disappointed. Finally you stop applying for admission to the club that keeps telling you "no" and make yourself believe that you never wanted to join those snobs in the first place. (Obviously, any member of your group who does gain admission is, by definition, a sellout.)

Should this fear of being left out— of falling among the discarded scraps that don't get sewn into the patchwork quilt—be part of the conversation? Can it be made part of the conversation in a way that doesn't risk painting blacks as moaners and crybabies who refuse to acknowledge the progress they've made? Can whites hear this part of the conversation—the ambivalence about our Americanism that is a part of black America's psyche?

Can we move beyond our pain before white America recognizes the seriousness of that pain and accepts that it is still being inflicted? Do our differing realities—our certain knowledge that neither John Winthrop's lovely words nor the "all men created equal" of the Declaration included us—keep us from working to make the words mean what they should have meant?

Can we learn to see ourselves (in Hackney's words) as "playing roles in a common story in which we are all linked to each other across barriers of time and boundaries of race in which we share the shame of our mistakes and the glory of our achievements, in which the meaning of America is to be found in the common ground of its aspirations of liberty and justice for all"? As Joan Rivers might have put it, "Can we talk?"

And here are a couple of reprints from Gene Lehman's newsletter LUNO. Gene does some of my best "watching" for me—in this case the national furore over "Ebonics." Over the years I've found many treasures in LUNO. *Thanks again, Gene!*

From: LUNO (Learning Unlimited Network of Oregon)
31960 SE Chin St.
Boring OR 97009

Phonics, Not Ebonics

I say amen to any program, like Oakland's Standard English Proficiency program. that could help...[kids] learn to speak standard English. I believe in educating teachers about the problems some children face when learning to read because their dialect confounds their grasp of phonics. ... If board members really wanted to help students, they would embrace phonics, instead of allowing phonics only in a few chosen schools. The switch to phonics has brought proven improvement in schools with indigent children. Barbara Foorman, director of research at the University of Houston, found that the switch to phonics brought poor first-graders and second-graders from near the bottom to the 44th percentile in a national reading test. Inglewood Principal Nancy Ichinaga found that switching to phonics brought her students from the bottom 3 percent to the top half in four years...

[—Debra J. Saunders, Creators Syndicate Inc..
OREGONIAN 12/26/96]

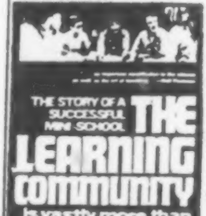
The King's English

Oakland schools are being unfairly maligned for trying a novel approach to teaching language. Too many students in Oakland come from families where there is unemployment, poverty and a sidetrack, not the mainstream. Should these students be welcomed into classrooms or shunned? Should they be judged deficient or offered a bridge to proficiency? The focus of Ebonics in Oakland is on teachers, not students. It teaches teachers sensitivity, understanding and a way to build that bridge.... Based on their experience, the Oakland Unified School District Board of Education ought to bring educational leaders together to discuss key issues around the education of African American youngsters. Are educational challenges the same or different from those of the majority culture? And as long as we accept the notion that different children have different needs, why can't African-Americans be accommodated? In African-American History Month, there is too much talk about visionaries of the past. But by opening a can of worms about learning styles and Ebonics, the Oakland school might be described as visionaries of the future. Let's get the facts straight on this Ebonics controversy and celebrate the educators who said their goal was, no matter how, to teach black children standard English proficiency.

[—Julianne Malveau King Features Syndicate Inc.
OREGONIAN 12/28/96]

The Learning Community:
the Story of a Successful Mini-school
by James Penha and John Azrak

Long out of print, this book tells the story of five high school teachers who successfully create an alternative "school-within-a-school. It is filled with the reflections of both the teachers and the students of how they created a caring atmosphere of community in their school.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A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned

by Jane Tompkins

Addison-Wesley, $20 hardback

Reviewed by Mary Leue

The first thing that struck me about this book was the exquisite specificity of Jane Tompkins' memory! There was something about the author's way of recounting details drawn with great concreteness from her early years in school that told me at once that these things had really happened to her, and, too, very much as she was describing them!

What struck me next about this fact was a kind of familiarity I was sensing about Tompkins' style as I read along. As a mother of five children, all of them having spent their formative years in public school, I recognized this narrative style! It was the same vividness of detail I used to hear from my children when it was necessary for them to tell me about some appalling thing that had happened to them in school that day.

I began speculating about what has kept our national compulsory system of schooling in place for all these generations since it was first invented. Because what Jane Tompkins was reporting is by no means exceptional!—she is not reporting on a "bad" school in a poor district! Because Jane's school was typical of an average American grade school! It's just that for all these years we have been accepting this level of intimidation and erosion of the self-confidence of our children as perfectly acceptable behavior on the part of our children's teachers! Why? Because it was practiced on us when we were kids! Because as parents we knew only too well what might happen to our own kids if we made trouble! Because the school held our kids hostage!

This extremity of fear may in fact not have been objectively warranted in many cases—in fact, probably isn't! But as parents, we have all been conditioned to fear the unknown where school is concerned, and that makes it all too easy to swallow myths about the essentiality for our kids' entire future of making good grades, of developing the capacity for successful academic competition, for warning our kids to stay out of trouble, do our homework, not antagonize the teacher—the whole package! Our entire school system, like our jails and prisons, runs on fear! And the hard work and ingenuity of a few creative, conscientious teachers throughout the system is not going to change that fact! As long as our school system is still compulsory, it will always run chiefly on the power of basic intimidation, on the bottom-line level of fear most people live with and take for granted as "reality."

It is this common fear-base inflicted on our most vulnerable citizens—our young people—which, for me, is the most anti-democratic cultural ingredient we have built into our entire governmental philosophy! Not exclusively, of course. Our entire medical model is fear-based as well, and young mothers are subjected to it at the time of the birth of *their* young, and in turn, subject their young to it through the practice of pediatrics even before the school system steps in to take over! But, by and large, the medical system through which we operate comes directly out of the school system, selecting its practitioners through keen competition, both academically and economically and initiating them through callously inhuman practices including acute sleep deprivation and premature demands on their capabilities throughout their training!

It is this entire training system Jane Tompkins is writing about in all its seamy glory. She is eloquent about the result this way of living had on her of in essence depriving her of the natural biological support system parents are supposed to have for their children! It placed her in a position of viewing them as spies for the system against her! She knew instinctively that it was not possible for her to get any support or even understanding of her daily terror from her parents. They were themselves products of the system, and took its exigencies for granted as inevitable! Even if they did not take on the role of actively enforcing those rigors, they would never have openly supported their child against them, because they took for granted the necessity of conforming, if one was to have a place of honor within that system! The main difference between working class and middle class children in relation to school, then, is that working class parents, by and large, are as clear as their kids are that the school system is the enemy, because they know from experience that the system is not for them—they are automatically excluded from becoming participants!

It is this instinctive clarity of recognition of one's place within the system that explains the omnipresence of the Ritalin bottles lined up in the nurse's office in middle class schools! The teacher complains to the principal about some child in her class who is not sufficiently conforming to her requirements. In turn, the principal advises the mother to take her kid to a doctor for diagnosis as damaged by that phenomenon they call ADHD. The doctor automatically takes the school's description of the child's "symptoms" as definitive of this phenomenon, and writes the prescription.

No one questions the entire procedure! Why? Because no one in the entire caste of characters has ever been allowed to protest its premises effectively! Long ago, they had each surrendered their own individual judgments to the requirements of the system! To call our culture "democratic" is a travesty in the face of such ruthless universal destruction of personal integrity over the generations of our history! Without anyone's having noticed it, we have gradually turned ourselves into a nation of "robots building robots." Tompkins expresses this paradox thus:

> School, by definition, conditions us to believe that there are others who know better than we do; it encourages and often forces us to give up our own judgment in favor of the judgment of those in authority. School by its existence, militates against the very thing that education is for—the development of the individual. The paradox is at its heart.

But Tompkins' education within the confines of our culture, inculcating, as it does, in its successful beneficiaries an array of characterological qualities it defines as excellences, also provided her with the skills she needed to "succeed" in her chosen career of teacher in the realm of "higher" education. And in this endeavor, she was aided and abetted by her parents, both of whom had themselves been defined as adults by their own childhoods within that system! Tompkins is eloquent about the role played in her own choices of a career within the system of her "love of Big Brother," to use the terminology of Orwell's poignant parable, *1984*.

> So in school, naturally, teachers were the prime object of my attention. That was where the power lay, so you had to keep up with what they were doing. Besides, they had knowledge—something I coveted—though like their power they kept it mainly to themselves. Perhaps it was simply because I had focused on them for so long that I learned to want to be like teachers. To be the one everybody looked at and had to obey, to be standing alone, up in front, performing while other people paid attention was the only thing I knew to aim for. When I attained this sta-

tus, it took me a long time to realize its emptiness—unless you were already connected to yourself and to your audience by something we never learned about in school.

Still, it was here, in my concentration on teachers, that the love of school took root.

This is a very good book to read for a number of reasons. What delights me most of all is perhaps its rich and evocative use of narrative, of autobiography, as a vehicle for truth. Tompkins is not pretending to speak as a representative of anyone or anything! Her medium feels to me a necessary antidote to the poison of the misuse of "scholarship" as a podium or platform from which to convince others of one's credentials which is so prevalent in educational literature—the resort to expertise, to authority, to the assertion of superior knowledge in this area. In giving voice to her own experience in all its shadings and gradations, Tompkins succeeds brilliantly in evoking a world which is as poignantly multifaceted as the world of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher*—which, in fact, she quotes from in more than one place.

This book deserves a place on the shelves of the libraries of homeschooling parents, schoolteachers, professors of education, college students, alternative schools and public schools as a significant antidote to the poisonous but largely unacknowledged fear from which most of us suffer, have suffered and will suffer throughout our lifetimes. It's time we began taking notice of the toll that fear has been taking, so we may begin to move beyond it. This book can be a real help in taking that step!

JUST FOR FUN:

Our faithful e-mail Jokenet delivered the following gem to us the other day!

KIDS HAVE ALL OF THE ANSWERS..

- Many dead animals of the past changed to fossils while others preferred to be oil.
- All animals were here before mankind. The animals lived peacefully until mankind came along and made roads, houses, hotels and condoms.
- Men are mammals and women are femammals.
- Proteins are composed of a mean old acid.
- The largest mammals are to be found in the sea because there is nowhere else to put them.
- Involuntary muscles are not as willing as voluntary ones.
- Methane, a greenhouse gas, comes from the burning of trees and cows.
- The spinal column is a long bunch of bones. The head sits on the top and you sit on the bottom.
- Mushrooms always grow in damp places and so they look like umbrellas.
- Some people say we condescended from the apes.
- The leopard has black spots which look like round soars on its body. Those who catch soars get leprosy.
- The three cavities of the body are the head cavity, the tooth cavity and the abominable cavity.
- Most books say the sun is a star. But it still knows how to change back into the sun in the daytime.
- Cadavers are dead bodies that have donated themselves to science. This procedure is called gross anatomy.
- A liter is a nest of young baby animals.
- The earth makes a resolution every 24 hours.
- Parallel lines never meet unless you bend one or both of them.
- Algebra was the wife of Euclid.
- A circle is a figure with 0 corners and only one side.

- A right angle is 90 degrees Farenhight.
- Genetics explains why you look like your father and if you don't, why you should.
- A supersaturated solution is one that holds more than it can hold.
- The pistol of a flower is its only protection against insects.
- An example of animal breeding is the farmer who mated a bull that gave a great deal of milk with a bull with good meat.
- If conditions are not favorable, bacteria go into a period of adolescence.
- Water is composed of two gins, Oxygin and Hydrogin. Oxygin is pure gin. Hydrogin is gin and water.
- When oxygen is combined with anything, heat is given off. This is known as constipation.
- As the rain forests in the Amazon are shrinking, so are the Indians.
- You can listen to thunder after lightning and tell how close you came to getting hit. If you don't hear it, you got hit so never mind.

DEEP THOUGHTS

From an actual newspaper contest where entrants age 4 to 15 were asked to imitate "Deep Thoughts by Jack Handey."

My young brother asked me what happens after we die. I told him we get buried under a bunch of dirt and worms eat our bodies. I guess I should have told him the truth--that most of us go to Hell and burn eternally—but I didn't want to upset him. Age 10

When I go to heaven, I want to see my grandpa again. But he better have lost the nose hair and the old-man smell. Age 5

I once heard the voice of God. It said "Vrrrrmmmmm." Unless it was just a lawn mower. Age 11

I don't know about you, but I enjoy watching paint dry. I imagine that the wet paint is a big freshwater lake that is the only source of water for some tiny cities by the lake. As the lake gets drier, the population gets more desperate, and sometimes there are water riots. Once there was a big fire and everyone died. Age 13

I like to go down to the dog pound and pretend that I've found my dog. Then I tell them to kill it anyway because I already gave away all of his stuff. Dog people sure don't have a sense of humor. Age 14

I believe you should live each day as if it is your last, which is why I don't have any clean laundry because, come on, who wants to wash clothes on the last day of their life? Age 15

Whenever I start getting sad about where I am in my life, I think about the last words of my favorite uncle: "A truck!" Age 15

It sure would be nice if we got a day off for the president's birthday, like they do for the queen. Of course, then we would have a lot of people voting for a candidate born on July 3 or December 26, just for the long weekends. Age 8

As you make your way through this hectic world of ours, set aside a few minutes each day. At the end of the year, you'll have a couple of days saved up. Age 7

Democracy is a beautiful thing, except for that part about letting just any old yokel vote. Age 10

Home is where the house is. Age 6

Often, when I am reading a good book, I stop and thank my teacher. That is, I used to, until she got an unlisted number. Age 15

It would be terrible if the Red Cross Bloodmobile got into an accident. No, wait. That would be good because if anyone needed it, the blood would be right there. Age 5

Give me the strength to change the things I can, the grace to accept the things I cannot, and a great big bag of money. Age 13

The people who think Tiny Tim is strange are the same ones who think it odd that I drive without pants. Age 15

I bet living in a nudist colony takes all the fun out of Halloween. Age 13

For centuries, people thought the moon was made of green cheese. Then the astronauts found that the moon is really a big hard rock. That's what happens to cheese when you leave it out. ,Age 6

Think of the biggest number you can. Now add five. Then, imagine if you had that many Twinkies. Wow, that's five more than the biggest number you could come up with! Age 6

The only stupid question is the one that is never asked, except maybe, "Don't you think it is about time you audited my return?"

or "Isn't it morally wrong to give me a warning when, in fact, I was speeding?" Age 15

Once, I wept for I had no shoes. Then I came upon a man who had no feet. So I took his shoes. I mean, it's not like he really needed them, right? Age 15

I often wonder how come John Tesh isn't as popular a singer as some people think he should be. Then, I remember it's because he sucks. Age 15

I gaze at the brilliant full moon. The same one, I think to myself, at which Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato gazed. Suddenly, I imagine they appear beside me. I tell Socrates about the national debate over one's right to die and wonder at the constancy of the human condition. I tell Plato that I live in the country that has come the closest to Utopia, and I show him a copy of the Constitution. I tell Aristotle that we have found many more than four basic elements and I show him a periodic table. I get a box of kitchen matches and strike one. They gasp with wonder. We spend the rest of the night lighting farts. Age 15

If we could just get everyone to close their eyes and visualize world peace for an hour, imagine how serene and quiet it would be until the looting started. Age 15

Let 'er go, Gallagher!

THOUGHTS OF THE DAY...

1. Be nice to your kids. They'll be choosing your nursing home.
2. Why is "abbreviation" such a long word?
3. Every morning is the dawn of a new error.
4. For people who like peace and quiet: a phoneless cord.
5. The beatings will continue until morale improves.
6. I've used up all of my sick days, so I'm calling in dead.
7. Mental floss prevents moral decay.
8. Madness takes its toll. Please have exact change.
9. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
10. There cannot be a crisis today; my schedule is already full.
11. Ever stopped to think and forget to start again?
12. A conclusion is simply a place where you get tired of thinking.
13. I don't have a solution but I admire the problem.
14. Don't be so open minded that your brain falls out.
15. If at first you do succeed, try not to look astonished.
16. Diplomacy is the art of saying,"Nice doggie"... till you can find a rock.

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Newswatch

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Twelve pages of readers' communications

...AND a lot more.......

ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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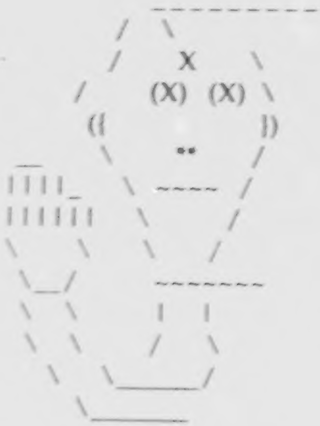

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The great articles, poems, letters you'll find in this issue keep pouring in, and it's getting more and more exciting doing this journal and sending them out to y'all! But it's not just stuff people have written, worked on, edited down, sent on, wonderful though these things are! I absolutely LOVE the new genre we've taken on, namely:

INTERVIEWS!!!

We've got four terrific ones in this issue! Jonathan Kozol, as you can tell from his mug on the cover, Akira Potter, student at Kinokuni Children's Village in Japan, very skillfully and respectfully quizzed by his father John (the first of several, John tells us!), and two others conducted by the kids in our oldest class at the Free School, inspired, I suspect, by ours! At any rate, Mario did it again with our kids, God bless him, and it's a duzy! Then, in another coup for the MOSAIC staff, Lily Mercogliano, whose grandmother's sister is married to the former Deputy Attorney General under President Kennedy, Nicholas Katzenbach, was able to interview her great uncle!

You'd think that was enough for one issue! But, as I say, so much gorgeous stuff is coming in in such profusion, we've had to stop doing separate kids' issues and gone back to a kids' section in each issue. AND we're getting great stuff from the kids! Makes me proud to publish it!

WARNING! Sermon coming up:

I'm beginning to think something is starting to penetrate into the adult world about kids' education. Let's use an analogy from another "insoluble problem"—alcoholism and how a guy named Bill set the whole concept of solving that insoluble problem by turning its management over to the people who have it. Well, the same principle may possibly be beginning to dawn in a few people's minds concerning kids and their education! Our modern concept of "childhood" is, after all, an artificial construct that never existed until the nineteenth century when the English Parliament was forced by the excesses of industrialism to invent it through a series of laws designed to prevent the devastating exploitation of children in the English cloth mills! Hey, now, if that's not a sweeping generalization worthy of a John Gatto, sue me! I just made it up, and if it isn't true, it ought to be! So there. It's certainly poetically true, anyhow.

The issue of child labor is even now being reexamined, like a number of other cultural shibboleths like technologized birth and traditional medical practice—and may be pertinent to our outmoded beliefs about how children learn best in school! Because we've been condemning adult exploitation of children in commerce as an unmitigated evil, the "educators" may have taken the "victim model" derived from this context and turned it on its head!, thinking that reforming the old, evil ways of these BAD adults must be accomplished via the good Protestant notion that GOOD adults need to fill those little "tabulae rasae," those empty little heads, so susceptible to victimization, with the thoughts and ideas THEY put there! So kids have gone from helpless victimization in the mills to helplessness against mental indoctrination in school! "For their own good," of course, as German psychiatrist Alice Miller would say!

The dichotomy is ultimately based on a false belief as to the nature of childhood! To me it all smacks of Victorian Lady Bountiful do-goodism which glorifies the characteristics of upper class culture and deplores those of the working class poor. So, sentimental pity for poor little exploited kiddies has been transformed into interfering with children's natural talents and proclivities in the name of upgrading them socially.

Hey—uncritically glorifying kids and their mores could be equally disastrous if not worse! In our school we've learned to beware of adults who have a "kid trip"! I remember once reading an article in *Parade* magazine that mentioned a study made of the relative success of parenting styles, permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. Only the latter gave evidence of much real success! RESPECT you gotta have! Being treated WITH it is the *only* way kids can learn to HAVE it!

NOTE—*Erratum* to be noted/corrected:

In the spring issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, I inadvertently omitted a line from the bottom of page 106, going over onto 107, right in the middle of the John Holt reprint! It ought to have read:
... [*Our job should be to help the kid when he*]...tells us that he can't find a way to get the right answer. Let's get rid of all this nonsense of grades, exams, marks. We don't know now, and we never will know, how to measure what another person knows or understands. We certainly can't find out by asking him questions. All we find out is what he doesn't know—which is what most tests are for, anyway. Throw it all out, and let the child learn what every educated person must someday learn, how

E-MAIL, FAX AND ON-LINE COMMUNICATIONS

From Jackie Devries, parent (from Jerry Mintz's* AERO *mail):

I have been discussing the Free School, mixed age ranges concept with my husband and would like some insight into how the different ages relate.

Our history is that our 1st child attended a mixed age preschool that accepted children from 2.5-6 years of age. He started at 2.5 and within 3 months he had seriously shut-down his artistic creativity (his gift). It was both a structured program and definitely didn't aim for a high level of intelligence (I say that because of the books they read at storytime).

We withdrew him from this program and kept him home until the following Sept when we started him in a cooperative program, that was also structured, (actually structured worse than the first one, but I'm learning) and had all children the same age together and parental involvement.

On the first day of school, my son had a tantrum (maybe the 3rd one in his life) and as I figured out what was happening I realized he was absolutely petrified. When I stated the feeling I thought he was having he agreed and I asked why and he said he was afraid the kids would punch him like at the last school.

Suffice it to say, the big kids picked on the little kids and despite a fair amount of supervision they got away with it and he never said anything to anyone about it.

What is different in the free school setting that keeps this from happening? Are the children that attend so different that they don't do normal kid things? How is this handled? How do easily frightened or meek children do in this setting?

Thanks for any insight that you can provide...

Yours,
Jackie Devries

Dear Jackie,

Oh, my heart hurts to hear about your son's experience! Your question is worth receiving a very detailed and various answer, which requires more than one person's viewpoint, so I am submitting it to several of our free school people to ponder. I'll send along what they say when I receive it.

My answer would be that in a properly-run free school, the children would have total access to peer level redress at will, which is another whole subject in itself! But that is more for kids over five, I would say. In your son's case, at 2.5 years, there is NO EXCUSE from teachers for such a thing to happen! That is what

A.S. Neill would call misidentifying license for freedom, and what I would call neglect under the guise of self-regulation or freedom! It appalls me.

I'd love to know what kind of school it was that this happened in, aside from its being "mixed-age," which also rather bothers me, in its implication that age-segregated schools would be an answer for this level of adult irresponsibility. It isn't.

Best,
Mary Leue

Dear Mary,

Thanks so much for your kind response. We have enrolled our son, now 5, in the Blue Rock School which isn't a free school, per se, but it's alternative approach does support him perfectly.

There are "classes", K-5, but these groups mix rather freely as part of the day. My son developed great fear of school from his experiences but also became overly agressive in social settings as a result of his experiences. All of this caused us to keep him out of preschool and to consider homeschooling, but both myself and my husband really felt he needed to positively experience himself in a social setting. We eventually did find Blue Rock, where he started K this year. The first half of the year held great growth for him socially (I saw significant changes in the first 6 weeks), then he regressed over the winter break and we are only now starting to see him recollect himself when he starts the day. Yesterday he actually went and got one of the 5th graders who he likes, to have snacks with, from the barn where the big kids are. This is fearful territory for him but he went on his own and got her. So we are seeing progress, but I also expect him to do K another year (he's a young kindergartner, born 12/25/91).

The pre-school was the Ramapo College Child Development Center. He was there only in the AM but with many kids who were there for full-time childcare. It is setup as a 1-room schoolhouse, quite a large facility but with a max of about 16 kids. I never went back to discuss with the teacher what he shared with me many months later, obviously I should. What I took away from the experience was that kids in childcare were often just deposited and collected and the parental concern or involvement wasn't high. That's what I saw on a day to day basis dropping him off (I work FT and my husband would pick him up at lunch). The all-day-long-kids were jealous of his having special attention from his Dad (they would go out to lunch after) and he had many more choices than they did. This and the age spread makes me think this made for a bad situation. But the structure also didn't serve him...

When I looked for the next pre-school, I went for a cooperative program with no child care, that seemed to focus on play. Unfortunately I needed to learn more, because they did focus on play, but only in 10 minute increments. My son has a long attention span (he usually does things for at least 2 hours) and this drove him crazy. He never engaged in anything and his aggressiveness really came out during their true free play.

I felt that the situation was only reinforcing the wound so I took him out after only a few weeks and they happily complied (he was a serious disturbance to the class and their process).

All this got us connected to a good school, we are very happy with Blue Rock, his artistic talents are treasured and encouraged by both us and the school. So in a way, the journey has gotten us to a good place, although there is still healing going on, but there almost always is, at least that has been my life experience.

If your school follows the free school model, I would be very interested in visiting to "experience" how it works. My brother is up in Delmar, so I could easily have the kids spend a day with their cousins... Do you accept visitors? What a question! I am actually off next week???

Well, let me know if this might be a possibility, thanks again for your kind note, and any other perspectives on how kids relate in the free school environment.

Regards, Jackie

Dear Jackie,

First things first. Yes, we love visitors and do hope you'll come on your day off! Call Nancy or Chris at 518-434-3072 and make sure we're in session. I've already mentioned your experience and concerns to each of them (they are the co-coordinators) and they intend to write me some notes to be sent on to you via e-mail, since neither of them is on line.

The issues you raise are SO IMPORTANT! These patterns are dreadfully destructive of children's earliest and first memories of what the world outside their family circle is like, and are indelible unless rapidly modified by better ones! Blue Rock sounds great! How I wish more mothers were able or willing to live their inner impulses and instincts as you have. We tend to downgrade the significance of such matters, since most of us had to go through them ourselves and NO ONE rescued us! I don't think it's conscious. It wasn't with me, anyhow. I did it to my daughter in an AT—"academically talented" third grade after she'd been in a small, wonderfully friendly and enjoyable school down in Texas where we were living. This was totally new to me, the horror of Northeastern city schools, and I got stuck in trying to work with the teacher to no avail! She was a dinosaur! I didn't know what else we could do, being brand new in the area and penniless after a move from Texas unpaid-for by my husband's job!

Ellen's eyes shrank back in her head, badly myopic, after seven years of normal vision! She was timid all through her school days and only "came out" in graduate school, under a marvelous professor who saw her excellence. When she got her job as a plant breeder at a seed company, her defense of her own employees was so fierce they called her "Rambo." How that delighted me! When I went to Illinois for a visit, they showed me the black mask and gun they had given her on Halloween as a joke! So she did overcome it, at least, functionally, but I suspect she still shrinks easily inside. I know I do, and I suspect most of us do!

I did help my fifth kid when it happened to him, found him a day care center with a woman who truly valued him, never scolded him for being aggressive, but helped him learn not to bite other kids (as he did for some months after the first place when he got scared), by giving him friendly suggestions for other options! So I am totally in sync with what you are doing! I think boys have the worst difficulties, and it is mainly because of the prejudice of women care-givers. Like the so-called ADD syndrome.

I'll send on the notes from Nancy and Chris when they bring them to me. Please stay in touch!

Love, Mary

And Nancy Ost, co-director of the Free School wrote Jackie as follows:

Dear Jackie:

Let me start out by saying that you are very welcome to visit. Our number is 518-434-3072.

I am writing in response to your query about how we handle aggression at the Free School. I don't think that you can ever have a group of children together without having aggression. In fact, it is a healthy part of our human nature. I believe that the structure you find in most preschools, daycare centers and public schools partially has the purpose of keeping kids occupied and thus controlled, so that teachers won't have to deal with these children's emotional lives. I want to say immediately that we in no way tolerate "bullying" at our school, however, we deal with it differently than I have seen most schools do.

In the Free School teachers offer activities and/or classes depending on the age level we are talking about. But very little is mandatory. In other words, children may choose not to come to an activity and may prefer to be doing something else. At times when that "something else" has the effect or the purpose of creating chaos which interferes with the teacher's activity, the teacher will deal with that in various ways in order to protect the space that she/he is creating together with other students. I may tell the kids who are causing distraction to leave the room, I may try to draw them into the activity or I may ask them to sit down and "take a break" for a while—it all depends on the age level and on the willingness of the kid to respect me and what I am doing.

When adults allow children this kind of freedom, allow them a great deal of chosen interacting time with each other, then like any "family" (for we are like a big family here) conflicts arise. We do not encourage or discourage conflicts, but we do help children and adults alike work through whatever conflicts result as a natural part of relating.

Aggression comes in different forms, but most people seem to fear and focus most on aggression that takes a physical form. We have a little boy, Chaiko, in our preschool/kindergarten program. He is the ninth of ten children, being raised by a single African-American mom. Most of the discipline that he has experienced at home has been with the "belt" or shrieking craziness. As the pecking order works, when he is at school, he often has chosen cursing or striking out to express his anger. He has been with us for nearly three years now. We have not turned him around totally, but because we stop him and insist on respect from him while also respecting his right to be angry, he has learned a lot more self-control and will speak more often than striking out. He mostly just plays now as any normal child does.

But as I said aggression takes many forms. We also have a white middle-class girl, Amy, in the same class as this boy. Her modus operandi is to shun children like Chaiko, hold herself above him, because she sure doesn't want to feel, let alone express, her anger. She would rather complain about his behavior to adults, exaggerating it in her own mind to keep herself distant from him. This is a malfunction which our society very early on inflicts on little girls. We want them to be "nice." There is power in feeling and expressing one's anger. And it is an essential part of any healthy relationship; we help children learn how to express their feelings in ways which nurture their relationships with others. If one is holding back "strong" feelings toward someone, then that relationship is usually pretty "dead."

So Amy's teacher is continually working with her to notice when anyone is treating her in a way that she doesn't like and encourages her to express directly to that person what it is she feels. For instance, if Amy is in class with Missy, her teacher, and another kid is constantly trying to get Amy's attention by needling her, Missy won't tell that child to stop; she will ask Amy if she likes what is going on. If Amy says no, then Missy will suggest to Amy that she turn to that child and do her own speaking. If Amy says she isn't bothered by what is going on or isn't even noticing it, Missy will encourage her to look at that as a possible area for self-understanding. Our student body is a real cross-section of today's lower and middle-class society. Our goal is to send children out of our doors knowing themselves and knowing how to relate to a variety of people and personalities. We know our families intimately, so we know the needs of the different kids. We don't plug in techniques; we deal with each situation as it arises. Our teachers learn how to be **aware** of what the energy in the room feels like; they know which children need a little extra awareness; they know there are two sides to every story; they know the power of aggression in the form of shunning, as well as that of physical and verbal abuse.

We desperately try not to interfere in the children's relationships when it is not necessary. We stop the behavior immediately when an older child is bullying a smaller child. But often when children of equal size and age get into conflict, we stand by, supporting them to work it out together (occasionally, even physically—and Chris offers an afternoon wrestling "class" which is very popular among both boys and girls, where most of the physical aspects of children's feelings get worked out)). On the older levels (i.e., not pre-schoolers), children often use our "council meeting," which is mandatory for everyone, children and teachers, and runs on a strictly Roberts' Rules of Order basis with an elected chairman (never an adult!), to gather everyone together to talk about a problem they are having; these problems are almost always relational. The students usually run these meetings and offer sound advice to each other. As a result these children learn how to relate without management or even advice by adults and develop amazing wisdom about relationships.

Love, Nancy

From: jmintz@acl.nyit.edu:

This Sunday at 11 EST I will broadcast my first show on the TalkAmerica Network. The show is called The Education Revolution, with Jerry Mintz. At first it will be heard on 8 stations around the country, but any station which wants to pick up the show can do so, and within a week or so it can also be picked up by internet with a sound card, and by satelite. The first stations carrying it include WRPT in Boston, KPMO in the San Francisco area, KSHP in Las Vegas, KNVA in Virginia, as well as stations in KS, MS, and AR.

On the first show I will be talking about the overview of changes taking place in education, such as homeschooling, charter schools, and alternative schools in general.

The network is a commercial one, and our first sponsors will include Clonlara Home-Based Education Program, and a consortium of innovative boarding schools including Horizons School in Atlanta, Arthur Morgan School in NC, Stone Soup in FL, The Meeting School in NH, and Petrolia School in CA. We will have a special web page for the show with e mail connections for our sponsors.

Even if you are not in one of the listening areas, we would like you to call in to the first show. You can do so by dialing 888 822-8255 or 822 TALK.

We will be interviewing a variety of guests, and probably a lot of people on this list-serve!

And from an e-mail letter Jerry sent on March 25:

I've just been informed that Clonlara School, in Ann Arbor, MI, needs a secondary teacher right away. The current one is having complications from a pregnancy. Plus, the school is building a new building and will need additional teachers next year. I've also been contacted by several charter schools looking for new teachers and directors. If any of you know of good people for these jobs, write back to me here or call us at AERO, 516 621-2195.

From Linda Dobson, Home Education Magazine's *Newswatch editor:*

Dear Mary,

Our "soul mates" in Japan need help - lots of help - and fast. The following is from Kyoko Aizawa of Otherwise Japan, a courageous homeschooling mother fighting the battle for freedom of education practically single-handedly. Each time she gets excited with one step forward (the imminent publication of her translation of an Education Otherwise; England's book, for example), she gets smacked with something like what is occurring now. The translation from the Tokyo Times, which follows, will explain things for you. Interestingly, the Tokyo Times was the only one of many large newspapers to even report this horrifying move:

On March 1, it was found out that The Ministry of Health and Welfare is now trying to reform the Child Welfare Law. In the proposal, they are planning to place into Kyogoin (juvenile reformatories) the children who are not going to schools,

The reform project of the Child Welfare Law about Kyogoin is now being considered and includes the following proposals:

1. The name will be changed to "Jidou Jiritsu Shien Shisetsu" (The institution to support children to become independent)
2. The target for the entrance will be widened to the children who don't go to school or dropouts who need guidance of consultation for their lives as a whole or study and jobs as well as juvenile delinquents.
3. The headmaster of the institution will have an obligation to make the children go to schools.

The Ministry of Education says "We are of the opinion that they are going to take charge of the care of the children in Kyogoin more courteously, but the care for the children who aren't going to schools is quite different. The child who has been bullied at school and refuses going to school, may happen to meet the child who bullied him at Kyogoin." (The Bureau of Education Support)

The children who enter Kyogoin are reprieved and exempted from going to school, and in most cases, they are given an instruction applied for the education at school by Kyogo who don't need to have a teacher's license. But nine out of fifty-seven Kyogoins have branches of elementary and junior high schools inside the institutions. The Ministry of Health and Welfare says that they want to widen this method.

Shigemi Ohkouchi, the chief of the Family Welfare Devision of the Ministry of Health and Welfare says, "This does not mean that the children who don't go to school are obliged to be put in there without fail. The chief of the Institution of Consultation for Children will have the right to make a decision. It is possible to divide the buildings for juvenile delinquencies and children who don't go to schools. We can consider the ways to apply for this method."

Yukio Kamogawa, the chief of the Division of Junior High School at the Ministry of Education who is taking charge of the school refusal says,"I can't understand at all that the new Kyogoin will take charge of the children who are not going to school. It is only the project for the survival of Kyogoin. Kyogoin are suffering from the decreace of the rate of children entering there. I can never think that the children who don't go to school and their parents want their entrance into Kyogoin. The problem of school refusal is fundamentally the problem of education. Schools, families and the regions are now coping with this problem. The Ministry of Health and Welfare should think firstly of the repletion of education for the children who are now in its institution."

(The following are Kyoko's words:)

Unfortunately,it is not clear if the Ministery of Education will apply this bill to children who don't go to school (They said they will not apply this bill to all school refusers.). In this bill, they say they need agreement of parents to send children to the juvenile reformatory, but they can deprive a parent's right to bring up their children, obtain domestic (relations) court's approval and be able to send the children to a juvenile reformatory.

So we are trying to demand not to apply this bill to home educators and school refusers. I think the Committtee of Child Rights of the Japan Federation Of Bar Associations will declare against this bill.

But the idea of home education is its early stage in Japan. So it is very difficult for me to make them understand the basic idea (freedom of education).

Please help us to oppose this !!!!

(Part of the following is from a News Watch report in Home Education Magazine—complete report available in the 11-12/96 issue; pg. 37. The rest is provided courtesy of Anne Wasserman.):About Kyoko and "Otherwise Japan":

> "Otherwise Japan" is trying to establish the right in law in Japan to non-institutional home-based education, but school refusal and home education are thought of as being the same thing in Japan.

(Linda's Note: School refusal is a term applied to children who absolutely will not go to school, many of them either ill from stress or terrified of bullies, many driven to suicide. While some alternative schools exist, they are content to follow the "state" curriculum, materials and tests and, therefore, don't fall under the broader, more independent educational approach many of us think of when we think of homeschooling.)

The Ministry of Education is trying to compel "school refusers," which includes homeschoolers, to take a rigorous test because of the increased number of children who don't go to school. The test follows a textbook approved by the Ministry of Education. And if a school refuser fails the test, s/he does not have the right to receive further education, or a smooth path to life work.

Even if they pass the test, they will not be able to receive the diploma. They can only receive the certificate that they passed the licensing examination of junior high school.

Kyoko saw that this educational approach breaks the Convention on the Right of the Child's U.N. Charter Article 28 (c): "Make higher education accessible to ALL on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means." Attorney Sayoko Ishii listened—and agreed. Together, these women decided to work for real educational freedom.

Please help "Otherwise Japan" and the homeschoolers of Japan by faxing your letters of support. Tell them about the legalities of homeschooling where you live and how it works for your children. Let the people of Japan know that the international community of home educators have their eye on Japan and this reform measure, and are concerned. The numbers are below:

The Ministry of Health and Welfare	+81 3 3503 0595
	+81 3 3503 1043
The House of Councilors	+81 3 3502 7711
The House of Representatives	+81 3 3581 5111
Newspapers	
Tokyo Times	+81 3 3471 5209
(Only the *Times* carried the news!)	
Ashahi Times	+81 3 3545 0285
Mainichi Times	+81 3 3212 0635
Kyoto Times	+81 3 5573 8082

IMPORTANT! DO NOT USE THE NAMES "KYOKO AIZAWA" OR "OTHERWISE JAPAN" when faxing. By doing so, you could create all sorts of problems for Kyoko. Mention only reading the newspaper article. As I understand it, time is of the essence. If you wish to communicate with Kyoko, her e-mail addresses are: JAB02521@niftyserve.or.jp OR otherwisej@aol.com

(Linda's Note: This is, admittedly, a task that will take valuable time, and international phone calls are not cheap. But I have been corresponding with Kyoko for about a year

now via e-mail and phone calls. She is a housewife; a mom simply intent on homeschooling her young son on the outskirts of Tokyo. But she watches reports of what is happening to Japanese children *and is* rightly frightened, and works tirelessly to do what she can. Now, she needs our help.

In the latest personal message I received from Kyoko she wrote, in part: I think I may have to run away from Japan to protect my child !!!!!

Please, please, do whatever you can to help Kyoko. Send this information to any newsletters or papers you think might care. Be sure to send your own faxes, but please also share this information as widely as you can with any individual or group you know is interested in educational freedom. Working together, maybe we can prevent this terrible abuse of governmental power over children and families.

Finally, I noticed Kyoko's e-mail addresses were forwarded with this message. If you think you can help better or more quickly by directly contacting her, please do so. If not, this really isn't a good time for personal contact as she is swamped with work handling this, and while she can communicate in English, it is still a trying and time-consuming effort for her.

Thank you all for whatever you may choose to do to help.)

For the children (everywhere),
Linda Dobson

From: John Potter 2, Kobe, Japan, Tel/Fax 011-81-78-241-3631:
Dear Mary,

Thanks very much for your letter and for all the information And thanks too for letting me know that you'll be using my interview with Akira in the *Journal*. He's very pleased about it too, of course. I hope you had a good time with Kazu Kojima from the Global School. I've met him a few times and have visited his school—at first when I was doing my Antioch MA on Alternative Education in 1992/3. Last year David Gribble (one of the founders of Sands School in Devon, England) came to Japan as he is writing a book about schools around the world and he spent a day at the Global School. I think he must have written something more up-to-date about Kazu's school so it might be an idea to contact him if he's willing to give you a report on his visit.

The stuff about the proposed changes to the law in Japan from the Ministry of Health and Welfare is very interesting—or, I should say, very frightening. However, I'm inclined to agree with Kazu in saying that I doubt very much if it will go through. I had a long talk with my better half—Midori—and she also thinks that it is unlikely to happen. She points out that in Japan, for better or worse, there is no tradition of state interference in the way that families bring up their children. Certainly, not to the extent of taking children away from their parents and putting them into care as there is, for example, in my country, England. She thinks that this culture of relative non-interference would make it difficult for such a drastic change to become law. We also hope that the authorities can be convinced that children who choose to stay at home because they can do all sorts of interesting things there, will not have to be classed as school refusers. By the way, Kinokuni Children's Village is a recognized school but doesn't have any pressure on it to follow the standard curriculum or method of teaching. There are no tests whatsoever, or grades, or homework. Of course, at present Kinokuni is the only one like this in the system, and so is limited in offering a recognized alternative for only a small number of children.

Hope you are well.
Love, John

(See John's interview with his son Akira, who is a student at Kinokuni Children's Village, on pp. 16-23 below).

More from Jerry Mintz, via e-mail:

... Yesterday I went to New Jersey to meet with Alexander Tubelsky, Principal of the School of Self-Determination in Moscow, Russia. He was traveling with a group of Russian school principals who were visiting schools around the United States. He was the only principal of an alternative school.

He had just toured the Educational Testing Service, the people who put out the SAT, etc. "When I saw that test, and the tests which they plan, I realized that there was no way we could stop this terrible standards movement. We hear about it everywhere we go."

We talked about this for quite a while, mostly with the help of interpretation by Alla Denisenko, who had been the head of the Foreign Language Department at Tubelsky's school, but now lives in Boston teaching ESL. She was my translator at the Eureka Conferences in Russia and we had run the youth program there together.

Almost simultaneously we came to the same idea: What we needed was to create our own standards. Obviously we had them. I had played with the idea of alternative standards in the past, but now we realized the power of announcing new INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS!

It is important to realize that Tubelsky's school has 1200 students, pre-school through 11th grade (that's the highest year in the Russian system). Ten years ago he had gone into an existing inner city school in Moscow and converted it to a democratically run school in which the students have a constitutional right to leave any class without explanation! The whole bottom floor is an open campus in which students can go where they please. There are shops, craft rooms, lounges, and even a student-built restaurant. On the trip back, Alla told me about the horrid resistance some teachers put up to these changes, making up scandalous stories about Tubelsky, Alla, and anyone else who supported them! But somehow they prevailed!

There is now a waiting list, but it is first-come, first served from pre-school through 9th grade. After that there is a panel of staff and students who decide who is best served by the school. It is probable that the school has a higher share of "problem students" coming to the school. Yet 60% of their students go on to University, against a national average of 8%. And they have only two or three droupouts a year, against a national total of 2 million dropouts out of 30 million students.

We would like you to think about what YOUR standards are in measuring a school. Then we will try to put them all together. We will particularly look for input from alternative schools in a variety of countries so that they will truly be international. Then we will present them publicly, fighting fire with fire, so to speak, to try to counteract this "standards" process which threatens to restrict us all. This reminds me of what Education Commissioner Riley said to me at the Education Writers Conference when I told him that alternative schools and homeschoolers were happy with their approach and didn't want these standards. He said, "We think that these standards will uplift us all."

We brainstormed some of the following ideas for standards: These are just rough ideas.

- A moratorium of ten years for academic standards
- Standards for the learning environment
- Standards for the amount of student empowerment
- The degree that curriculum is learner-centered
- Every student is responsible for their own curriculum
- Non-compulsory class attendance
- Educational free spaces--workshops, art, science, etc.
- Opportunity for work experiences and internships

PLEASE SEND US YOUR IDEAS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS!

Jon Scott (Modern School Movement) sent on a copy of a letter to Jerry;

... Regarding standards, as per your last e-mail, instead of a moratorium on them eliminate them entirely and replace "group", age or whatever "standards" with individual standards. They are the only kind that matter. When you do this all standards go up as we all know from the experience of the free schools like yours, AFS, the Modern School, Sudbury and so on. Children have a natural tendency to compare themselves with others so we don't need to do it. When you make "national" or "state" standards, for example, all standards must go down and they usually do as we know from the NYS Regents exams, SAT's and the like which are jokes as most of my college students know. They emphasize speed and recall not skills and ability to synthesize, talent for learning and many other things graduates obtain from free schools. I agree with the rest of your list and may recommend the subject for our next MS reunion. Might get some lively discussion.

Wow! Tubelsky's school in Moscow sounds great. Hope he doesn't lose his battle with the standards movement he talks about. You know as a good anarchist I wouldn't mind setting off a big bomb at the SAT place in Princeton! Unfortunately, it would do no good since it would take them only a few days to set up at a new place—kind of like a cancer. The only way to "win" the battle against such rubbish is to form more schools like the School of Self Determination (what a great name), schools which obviously produce better standards, because the students choose their own and when given a chance they produce very high standards for themselves. Doesn't the great record (low dropout, high college admissions etc.) make any sense to the educational administrators?. Mary would probably say something about the education establishment not really wanting high standards—Ron Miller would agree, as he pointed out in "What Are Schools For?".

By the way, most of the standards in your list pertain to schools whereas the SAT's and the like are measures for students which are then used to assess the schools. No doubt the education commissioners also have standards for schools. How clean are the floors? How big is the library? Are the sports facilities good? And you know the rest. Yours are far superior.

Jon Scott: [jscott@atmos.albany.edu]

I would hope that no one who reads this journal needs to be told who Jonathan Kozol is. We've published articles, reviews of his books (even an interview he had given Ebony *magazine) whenever we've come across them. They are all reproduced in the three volumes of our* ΣKOΛE *anthology* Challenging the Giant. *Suffice it to say that his latest book,* Amazing Grace (see review in ΣKOΛE Winter (1996), pp. 99-103), *is the culmination (so far!) of a lifelong career of gentle, passionate advocacy for the children of the poor.*

The staff of the Free School first met Jonathan when he was speaking at Union College in Schenectady, NY in 1972. I was so bowled over by his eloquence that I ran up on stage after the talk and threw my arms around him, declaring, "You are my brother!" And so we've been ever since! This inter-interview came about because Jonathan was the keynote speaker at an annual program honoring Martin Luther King which is given in the huge gymnasium at Siena College in Albany.

Last year's speaker was Marian Wright Edelman, of the Children's Fund. We tried (unsuccessfully) to get a tape of her speech to publish in ΣKOΛE, *but were able to talk Jonathan into giving us time after* his *talk! We are grateful beyond measure to Jonathan for this boon!*

An Inter-INTERVIEW:

ΣKOΛE staff members interview JONATHAN KOZOL
and JONATHAN KOZOL interviews US

Mary: Jonathan, where did you grow up? I grew up in West Newton and Lincoln [Massachusetts]. Where did you grow up?

Jonathan: I grew up in Newton Center and later taught in West Newton, at a school just off West Newton Square, just behind Brigham's Ice Cream. I remember that because I never had breakfast, but I used to race out at lunch—we had a half hour or so. The kids went home for lunch in Newton. I had just time to race up to the Square and have a root beer float at Brigham's. So I'd have some energy when the kids came back after lunch. Where did you grow up, Mary?

M: I was born in West Newton and we moved to Lincoln when I was five.

J: You don't really remember West Newton Square.

M: Oh yes. I remember it very well.

J: It was a nice, old-fashioned neighborhood. It was nice. There was a movie theatre, do you remember that?
M: Down on Washington Avenue.
J: Yes.
M: Yes, yes.
J: Even when I was teaching, you could still go there for maybe a dollar on Saturday afternoon.
M: We lived with my aunt in West Newton for a couple of years when Bill was writing his thesis at Harvard. So I remember it better from then.....
J: Did you go to college in Massachusetts?
M: I went to Bryn Mawr.
J: I didn't know that.
M: And then nurses' training in the Children's Hospital in Boston, which is not like Boston City Hospital.
J: Children's Hospital I know very well. I've been there as a patient. That was a long time ago.
M: Those days were what they now call the Golden Age of Medicine. I was in nurses' training from 1940 to '43. We had all the big guys, Dr. Sam Ladd, Dr. Robert Gross who did the patent ductus arteriosus, Dr. Ingraham, the neurosurgeon.
J: That precedes the time when Dr. Spock was well known, right? He hadn't written his book yet.
M: No.
J; That must have been ten years later, the late 40s perhaps?
M: It was when my son Peter was born, so that would be about '46.
J: Was there a time when you considered his writing valuable to mothers?
M: Oh my, yes.
J: Do you remember, later he came under a lot of heat from the women's movement because the books were....
M: Oh that was nonsense. Yes.
J: You remember that?
M: Of course, yes.
J: This is sort of a loaded question because you know that I'm fond of him and view him as a friend.
M: He and I used to correspond. He was wonderful. I'd write him and I'd say, "Now look. I'm seeing all these parents who practice permissiveness toward their children and it's very bad for them." And he'd say, "Well, I talked to my wife Jane and she tends to agree with you." And this kind of thing. He was a lovely, lovely man.

J: He and Mary—his second wife—used to visit me at Lawrence Street [in Boston]. I remember one night when they were there as guests. I went to tap on their door to ask them a question. They said, "You can come in." I went in and they had on matching pajamas and they looked like kids. They had the mischievous nature of kids, too. They were fun to be with.

M: It must have hurt him a lot when the women's movement started attacking him.

J: I think he handled that well. He did a lot of rewriting for the next edition. One thing I like about Ben Spock is that he's able to handle criticism comfortably. He just rises above it and if something needs to be fixed, he fixes it and he gets on with the job. He has extraordinary resilience. He's one of the most likable people I've ever met in my life. Do you know where I met him the first time? In jail.

Jonathan reminiscing about his night in jail

I met him in the cell block in Washington D.C., an anti-war demonstration, probably before I knew you, Tisha. It was in 1972 or 73, around the time of the last major bombing in Vietnam. And somebody I knew, Howard Zinn or Noam Chomsky left a message basically saying, "Would you like to come to Washington and go to jail?" And when I got there I found Dr. Spock and Arlo Guthrie were going to jail also.

Tisha.: You were in good company.

J: I also met George Wald that night, sitting in the cell block. It must have been around midnight, and this intensely artful, serious and very handsome, very scholarly looking man came over to me and just sat down. He said, "I'm George Wald. I'd like to talk with you about children." I'd just published *Free Schools*. And, it was one of the most interesting evenings of my life, actually. They let you make a phone call when they book you—long after they'd booked us, actually. So I went out and called my Dad collect, you know (laughter) in Boston. I called and I said, "Don't worry. I'll be staying in Washington an extra night or two." (laughter) He said ,"Where are you?" And I said, "Well I'm in jail." He said, "Are you alone." I said, "No. There are all these other people. Dr. Spock is in the next cell on one side of me (laughter) and on the other side is a psychiatrist (laughter) Robert Lifton. " Remember Robert Lifton?

M: Sure.

J: My Dad, being a psychiatrist himself, was very good at put-downs and he thought for a while and said, "Well that sounds like good company for you. A pediatrician and a psychiatrist." (long laughter).

T.: That's a bonding experience.

J: My most vivid memory was that by morning everybody looked ratty. You know how it is when you've been up all night and couldn't sleep and slept in your clothes and you just want a cup of coffee. But Ben got up in the morning in his three-piece suit and he looked neat—he didn't look at all ruffled or tired.

M: He's a very tall person.

J: Striking-looking.

M: Very. I loved all the doctors that I worked with at Children's Hospital. They were marvelous human beings. I don't think there are many doctors of that caliber any more. You know the tradition of giving a day a week in the public ward in the hospital? They don't do that any more.

J: Do you think the HMOs have made it harder for doctors to also be human beings, forcing them into very difficult, often ethically untenable positions where they have to ration care but are prohibited from explaining to the patient why they're not recommending something?

M: The profit motive does an awful lot of damage in general.

J: I know a lot of very good doctors who are deeply troubled by that. Is there an important medical school here in Albany?

Larry: Yeah, Albany Medical College.

J: Do you and Mary know each other, Tisha?

T.: Yes. When I was first met Mary, just a couple of years ago, I felt like I had known her for a long time, Jonathan, through our work together, because I remember you corresponding with Mary for years.

J: Mary, has Albany been a supportive place for you to have your school ?

M: Yeah, I would say so.

J: Would it have been harder to do it in New York City?

M: It'd be a lot harder. I think it's easier in Albany. We've had a surprising amount of support from the Board of Education. Occasionally we've had to fight to get what we want, but it's a small enough place so that people can afford to be human and we've never had any really serious difficulty. There aren't that many families that want to send us their kids. We never gotten above 50 kids.

J: What's the age span?

M: Nursing babies, if there are some, up through eighth grade—so about age 14, although kids have stayed later than that if they really needed it, but we don't encourage them.

J: What do most of the kids do after that?

M: Go to public school.

J: Public high school?

M: Oh, yeah. What would you say socio-economically, Chris, what is the mix? Chris is the co-director now.

Chris: Fifty-fifty.

M: Fifty-fifty what?

C: Fifty middle class; fifty percent poor.

M: I think it's very successfully integrated in terms of race, cultural origin—socio-economically.

J: Mary, how do you feel about the current status and direction of the home school movement? I remember, John [Holt] and I used to have debates about that. I used to say, "Well that's okay for your friends on Beacon Hill, but what's it going to mean for poor kids?" It was an old dilemma.

M: Things have changed so much for the worse in recent years, it almost feels as though any government schooling has a taint to it.

I can see why, if I were starting a family I would want my kids to be at home.

J: If you're educated yourself?

M: No, just in general, just to keep them out of the toils of officialdom, stultification, trivialization, and conformity. All of these terrible things that happen to children in the public schools, inferior people, generally speaking, culturally inferior, laying down arbitrary rules that children don't understand. I think it destroys their souls.

J: But what do you do in a situation like certain neighborhoods in New York where an awful lot of fathers might be in prison or might be dead or very sick in the hospitals or AIDS wards or hospices. And the mother's often overwhelmed by day-to-day emergencies, just keeping the heat on or not getting evicted or if she has AIDS, then constantly going for treatment. So with all those emergencies I think an argument can be made in some cases that the local public school down on the corner is probably the happiest place that child has. I'm thinking of one public school I've gotten to know well in the South Bronx which really is a very loving place, a nice place to be. Sometimes when I'm in that school I want to take back all the mean things I used to write because it's just nice, a wonderful principal whom many folks in your group would like.

M: That's all it takes. I don't think it's theoretical.

J: But, in that case, only a tiny number of mothers in that neighborhood would have the time or the resources or the skills to do home schooling on a level that would give their kids a chance later on. Do you see my dilemma?

M: Yes I do. It's mine too.

J: It's a dilemma we've always faced. Tisha, I could see you doing home schooling. I can't imagine any school that could do for a child what you could do. You and John both.

T.: I've been thinking about that just these past months and Mary and I have been talking about it.

J: It does mean that you'll be denying a lot of other kids the benefit of having you as an advocate for the public schools, because nobody advocates hard for a school if their kids don't go to it. I've learned that in New York City where many of my ex-liberal friends don't send their kids to public school, so they don't advocate for it. So the school gets worse.

M: You know, when you're a parent, your children are hostages.

J: All bets are off at that point.

M: It's very difficult to take.

J: You'd better not do it.

T.: Well I look for pockets of positive experiences. I have five kids, but only two in public school. I have one in a private school and two who are not yet in school. But I do very seriously consider homeschooling. My kids are in public school for the first time ever. When I lived down in Hoboken, they were in the Mustard Seed School. I look for positive experiences and I do a lot of work towards educational reform in the public school system in the community in which I live. I would miss that, because I have a commitment to a larger community outside of my own home, but I think I'd probably still be drawn to that even if I were to homeschool. I look at my three little girls and I think that they'd probably be better off at home with me.

J: How old are your little ones?

T.: One, five and seven.

J: Tisha, do you like having children? (laughter)

T.: Ah, I love everything about it.

M: Jonathan, what do you think of the voucher proposal?

J: Now you're being a devil's advocate, because you know that I am bitterly opposed to vouchers.

M: Well I know you have been. I remember the interview you gave *Ebony Magazine*.

Jonathan: I'll tell you why I'm opposed to vouchers.

When we think of vouchers, we tend to contemplate only the types of schools that we like, for example, the kind of school that you would run, or the school at St. Jerome's, a church I like in the South Bronx, or St. Augustine's another school I like. The trouble is, if vouchers were ever instituted, there'd be no way under the Constitution that you could limit it to the schools that we approve of.

In other words, if vouchers can be used for beautiful, free schools that Mary and I might like or a lovely Montessori school or just an intimate, affectionate small Catholic school, there's no way you can deny vouchers to a Pat Buchanan school, or a David Duke school or a Louis Farrakan school. Where would that leave the nation? There are so many divisions already in our society. It would go even further. Conservative foundations might well be tempted to start a string of schools in order to groom little right-wing zealots.

It would make political sense—after all they're already generating recruits through institutions like the *Dartmouth Review*. Why not start with elementary school kids? Certainly private industry would love to see a voucher market opened up. We might end up having McDonald's academies. Why not? It would be a lot of money and they could do it superficially well. I can see their brochures now, full of quotes from George Dennison and John Holt, and maybe even from me... (low laughter). They'd quote Paulo Freire if it would win them a slice of the market in a Latino neighborhood. As the military industry winds down with the end of the Cold War, (although it's not winding down fast enough), as it diminishes, education is a booming market. Call it the educational-industrial complex.

Those are a few of the reasons why I'm opposed to vouchers. If you could limit vouchers only to Mary's school and no other school in America, I'd be in favor of vouchers ...

C.: I think that we'd be wary of the strings that might be attached.

M: We've never taken money.

J: But do you see my point? Private business has already set up a charter school in Boston run for private profit, but getting public funds. I walked in there the other day. They wanted me to visit and my first reaction was, "Wow, they're doing all the things I used to talk about. This is neat. And it looks terrific." Carpets on the floor. You know, next they'll have kids playing cellos. (laughter). They know how to pick up on particles of liberal ideas that seem attractive. And they could put a real little free school out of business by exploiting that image. I think it's a mistake. I think that those of us who want to venture outside and do model

schools on our own ought to do it on our own and not rely on the government.
M: Well, this is what I keep saying. I wouldn't want government money. I wasn't thinking about what *we* might get out of it.
J: I also don't agree with the basic idea of the voucher advocates, which is that an unbridled free market and competition will improve education in America. I just don't believe it. It will improve marketing. We'll have better school advertising, but I don't see any reason. ..... How has unbridled competition given us better candy bars?
C.: Or health care, as we're seeing.
J: Or health care, God help us. The private market people want to go into the prison industry too. I don't know how they're going to advertise that. (laughter) "Come to Elmira. We have the best accommodations."
C.: Do you ever cross paths with Gatto?
J: Only in the pages of the magazine.
C: You guys have never met. Oh wow.
J: He sounds like a very smart, interesting, likable guy, but I would deeply disagree with him on the vouchers.
M: He's a romantic pirate.
J: When has the private market in banking ever served poor people in the ghetto well? When has the private supermarket industry ever served the people in the ghetto well? Why should a private market in education serve them any better? I don't buy it. We'll end up with Brooks Brothers schools for the privileged and K-Mart schools for the poor. I happen to like K-Mart, but ... (laughter). You know where I got this coat? It's from a store called Marshall's. Do you have that in New York?
Everyone: Yeah.
J: It's great. You need running shoes? You just have to wait till your size pops up. (laughter)
M: What day is your birthday?
J: September 5 is actually my birthday but I celebrated it in the Bronx much later, the day that Mr. Rogers was there. I was in heaven. It's every old man's dream to have Mr. Rogers at their birthday party. (laughter) We sat by the piano and he played...you know that song that he sings? What's that song?
Several people: "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood; a beautiful day in the neighborhood... "
J: He played it and Mario sat up on the piano and sang it. I was touched that he wanted to visit and particularly moved to see the way people in the neighborhood responded to him. People, whatever their race or economic level, can sense when somebody's for

real. Certainly anybody who does things with children... What you see with Mr. Rogers is exactly what you get. There's absolutely no artifice. He talks exactly the way ...

T.: Did he wear his sweater?

J: I was disappointed (laughter). He didn't have his sweater.

M: He hangs it in his closet. He doesn't go out with it.

J: That's right.

M: He takes his coat off and he puts his sweater on.

T.: He changes his shoes; that's right. He will put on his suit coat and puts his street shoes on.

M: I watch him.

T.: That's why I have so many kids ... because they like Freddy Rogers and I have an excuse to watch it every day.

J: He speaks in a very soft way so the children have to get very close to him so they can hear him.

M: Right.

J: He won't magnify his voice.

T.: No, he's not into kind of bombarding kids, like Sesame Street, which has a value of its own, but it's very, very different. I mean Fred speaks to the heart and soul of children and Sesame Street speaks to the mind and intellectual...

J: I watch Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers. Sesame Street comes on in the later afternoon in Boston on one of the stations. If I'm feeling depressed, I get my dog to sit on the sofa with me and we watch it together and I love it. "Today's program is sponsored by the number 6.." I've watched little kids in the Bronx watching it and it really does affect them. Maria is sweeping. A child goes in the kitchen and gets a broom and sweeps just like Maria is doing.

C: Would you say writing *Amazing Grace* changed you more than some of the other books you've written?

J: This was emotionally the hardest work I've ever done. It also had a deeper effect on me than anything else, in part because I've gotten to know the children in the book and their brothers and sisters and cousins and mothers and grandmothers so well. I go back there again and again and again. When I feel most discouraged about what's happening in Washington, I just go back and spend an evening with the kids there at the church, because the children there do believe in something. They believe in God and the little ones still believe in America, which is more than you can sometimes say for the members of Congress. They don't seem to believe in anything except getting re-elected. So I go back there a lot. I feel at peace there.

M: What's happened to Mrs. Washington? Is she still alive?

J: Yes. She's alive and has had what doctors would call a remission.

M: I bet it had something to do with you.

J: No, it has nothing to do with me! But it's true we are good friends. She does me a lot of good. Yesterday she sent me a big fat envelope full of Sleepy Time Tea and she enclosed....she cut out the package cause she knows I like that picture. You know, the bear. She does nice things like that. She's very unselfish. She calls up my answering machine, "Don't make me worry about *you, too.*" (laughter) So we worry about each other.

Amazing Grace didn't change me politically. My politics are unchanged. It changed the inside of me. I cannot explain it but I do know, on the rare occasion that St. Ann's is closed for any reason, I go to another church. I go to St. Jerome where Father Grange is the priest. There's also a cloister of nuns that I've been visiting. They have my education well underway. Just when I thought I'd read all the theology I should, they've started telling me it's time to read St. Augustine. I can see I'm never going to catch up. (laughter). I like the priests and the nuns. I like the way they're able to combine political activism and service and struggle on the one hand and reflective lives on the other. I wish I knew how to reconcile the two because I think I've been better at struggle than reflection.

M: We have a connection with a Japanese Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist nun. She built a peace pagoda just up in the foothills of Albany and we all came out and helped. Jun-san is wonderful. She is a tremendous friend of Native American people. She stayed at Onondaga the better part of a year a number of years ago, became very good friends with Dennis Banks. She's a wonderful woman. Chris and I've been to Japan with her. It's that same feeling that you're talking about. At least it sounds like that way. I would love to be able to be that way....to be, you know....it's hard. How do you describe Jun-san? She's extraordinary. She goes on walks, peace walks, Native American walks.

J: There are Trappist monks and Franciscans who have achieved the same kind of serenity and still are very active in the world. But, to be honest, the main reason I go back to the South Bronx so much is to be with children. Most of my best friends are children. If I had my way, I would spend the rest of my life with people less than three feet high.

T.: Perhaps you're destined to be a kindergarten teacher after all.

J: Maybe (laughter). If I ever get back to teach kindergarten, I'd like to have a few golden retrievers in the mix.

Connie: Roxanne is the dog at the Free School. She has become the pet of the school and the kids hang out on her tail.

J: There's a dog at St. Ann's church. The children brought the priest a homeless dog some years ago and that dog lives in her office. Still lives there. When he came in from the street he was so mangy the children called him Ugly. (Laughter). I don't know if he got an official baptism, but he's now called Handsome. (Laughter). He's a charming little friendly creature who has a very important role at the church. The little kids love to walk with Mother Martha when she walks Handsome, which she does at least twice a day. Sometimes there's a faint smell of pee in the office but it doesn't subtract one bit from the sacredness. (Laughter)

C: What are you working on now?

J: I'm not working on anything. This is the first year in my life where I really haven't worked on any new book at all. I've just been going back to have reunions. Over Christmas I actually sat down and calculated, it was my 200th visit on the same trip, Number 6 train to Brook Avenue. Christmas eve was a beautiful evening there. They usually have two services there, one in English and one in Spanish. The priest does both. She didn't know Spanish when she went there. She went to Berlitz and learned in one summer. Tisha knows how terrible my Spanish is. In a few years I'm going to have to identify who Tisha is: a wise spirit that I've known for many, many years. Last time we got together was when I spoke near Newark; where was it?

Tisha: Jersey City State College.

J: Do you still have that horrible car?

T: I have another horrible car.

J: Tisha always has beat-up cars.

T It's the only thing I can afford—beat-up cars. There were holes in the bottom of the floor and the carpet was just over the holes and the manifold got so hot that it started the carpet on fire one day and I had all of my children packed in and on the way down to Cape Cod for summer vacation and smoke started pouring up from the floor and that was it for that car. I had kids, pillows, sleeping bags, tents; we went camping. It was a 1976 Chevy Nova.

J: Mother Martha's car reminds me of that car. It's very much like it. Her car has one of these strange infirmities like you can't open the window on the right side and if you do, if you start to, she jumps as though something terrible will happen (laughter). The car will die if you roll down the window.

T: I had to get rid of that car. It was a sad day for the whole family. We still have the kev of the Nova that we hang in our kitchen.

I loved that car but when it almost killed us we decided to give it up.

J: Is John still working with the state legislature?

T: John is still working with the state legislature, which is why we still drive beat-up cars. It's a very hard job that doesn't pay well at all. He works for the New York State Assembly for a particular committee.

J: The committee that deals with the courts?

T: Criminal Justice Committee. Anything that has any criminal justice impact with regard to legislation is his department.

M: Ellen is a law guardian in Schenectady.

J: What does that mean, law guardian?

Ellen: It means the court appoints you to represent children in certain matters. Now I've represented children in custody matters primarily, but occasionally a foster care placement or something.

J: I went to speak at a conference last fall called "Court Appointed Special Guardians for Children." It was called CASA, the national organization. They were people from all over the country who'd been put in that role. Not necessarily with any special expertise. Are you a lawyer also?

E: I'm a lawyer, yeah.

J: They didn't have to be lawyers, did they?

E: In New York you do, but actually one of my best friends from high school is an advocate for children in North Carolina and she's not a lawyer. She goes in there and gives them hell if they don't give them the right treatment and pushes for this and for that. She got into it because she took on fostering a couple of kids. And she's been doing it for most of her life.

J: Do you go into juvenile court?

E: I haven't done any of the delinquency cases. I primarily do custody. Delinquency is criminal law and I don't know that, so I don't do it.

J: Is that what they call PINS cases?

E: No, PINS is when you're a "Person In Need of Supervision." That's when you've got a teenager out of control.

J: I always thought it was one of the most unfortunate acronym. (laughter) What else could they call it, NEEDLES? (laughter) I guess we shouldn't be disrespectful of the experts in the State who think up these acronyms.

E: Oh I don't know why not.

J: How did you know Mary?

E: Well, that's a long story. Larry and I used to subscribe to the *Journal of Orgonomy*. It's a Reichian journal. In the *Journal of Orgonomy*, about 20 years ago, before we had any children, was an article called "Shoestring School" which Mary had written. And we both said, "Gee, when we have children, we'd love to have our children go there." Larry was a carpenter at the time; I was doing editing on medical journals.

Larry goes to law school, we come up here, I follow him into law school, I get pregnant my senior year in law school, and he is having a lunch at some downtown lunch place and talking about his pregnant wife and the waitress says, "Gee, there's this great pregnancy support group you ought to go to." And so we do, and who's there but Mary and Betsy, the midwife who just left, and Chris.

Connie: A gorgeous couple. Ellen in this bright yellow dress. Her hair just like....

E: And what do we find? That this school we read about five years before is just down the street. So we looked for and found an abandoned house in the neighborhood, bought it, fixed it up, moved in...

Larry: Chris introduced us to that house.

E: It was all boarded up.

L: In his coyote nature, he said, "It just needs to be vacuumed, really." (laughter)

Chris: A little painting, a little painting.

M: We own ten buildings. This is how come we can do the school. We don't have funding. We rent out apartments and that's what keeps the school going. So we don't have to charge high tuition.

J: I see. Are you a lawyer, Larry?

L: Yes..

Tisha: Becker & Becker.

M: A husband and wife team.

J: What kind of law do you do?

L: I do construction litigation mostly.

J: What is that? Like when a building collapses?

L: Yes. I hardly ever get involved with successful construction projects. I usually get involved with them when they fall down and go boom.

J: (to Ellen) What do you do?

E: Matrimonial: divorces, child support, custody battles.

L: I also try to get tax exemption for the school.

M: We all live right in one big block. It's wonderful. Right around the school, downtown Albany.

J: Sounds wonderful... This has been fun. I've really enjoyed this conversation. Here we are, sitting in the corner of this huge auditorium that an hour ago had twenty-three hundred people in it

and now there's just the eight or ten of us and it's getting a little cold (laughter) and it's midnight. It's really been great to see you again, Mary. It's been wonderful. And I'm glad we had this chance.
M: We've had a lot of fun.
J: Keep sending me the magazine.
M: Okay.
J: Good night.
Everybody: Good night.

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We received the interview which follows from John Potter whom I call "JP2" to distinguish him from the "JP" who is the Head of the New School of Northern Virginia (see pp. 39-42 for JP's piece on writing). This John Potter lives in Kobe, Japan with his Japanese wife and seven-year-son Akira, and has sent us a number of articles on alternative education—on Homer Lane, A.S. Neill and Summerhill, where he has been a teacher—and on Japanese education. John is beginning to be known in educational circles in Japan since his article on the latter topic was published in a Japanese journal. We are proud to publish this interview with Akira-chan about his new school:

KINOKUNI CHILDREN'S VILLAGE: A CHILD'S VIEW

by John Potter

The following is the unedited transcript of two interviews with Akira, a seven-year-old pupil at Kinokuni Children's Village in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan. At the time of our conversations, in March 1997, Akira was just coming towards the end of his first year as a weekly boarder at the school, which claims to offer a radical alternative to the well-publicized rigid schooling system of Japan.

Kinokuni (known as *Kinokuni Kodomo no Mura* in Japanese) was founded by Shinichiro Hori and a group of supporters in April 1992 and is a 'modified model' of Summerhill School. It bases its philosophy on a combination of the ideas of A.S. Neill and John Dewey. Consequently, it is a boarding school with voluntary lessons and a form of self-government through weekly General Meetings, as at Summerhill. To this framework has been added a great deal of experiential learning through project work—the 'learning by doing' advocated by Dewey. It is a private school and the first of its kind to be granted recognition by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Kinokuni began as a primary school, taking children from the ages of six to 12. Since April 1994 it has expanded through the addition of a junior high school section where children may continue for a further three years until the age of 15. In March 1997 there were a total of 140 children at the school, 101 of them in the primary school section. Including part-timers, the teaching staff numbers 18 and there are seven houseparents. The school is situated high in the mountains above the town of Hashimoto and is accessible only by a narrow winding single track road. The majority of the pupils, like Akira, are weekly boarders. This means that they arrive at the school on Monday mornings and go home for the weekends after classes on Friday afternoons. A smaller number of children who live within a reasonable distance of the school are day pupils. Some pupils who live in further flung areas of Japan stay on at the school for the whole term or, perhaps, return only occasionally during the school term.

Akira attended a small private Japanese nursery school from the age of three to six near his home in the city of Kobe. He then attended the Kinokuni Children's Village 'mini-school' during Autumn 1995 before deciding to join the school proper. It takes about two and a half hours to make the complete trip from Kobe to Kinokuni and Akira's mother usually accompanies him as far as Hashimoto station where she also collects him on Fridays. The remainder of the journey between the railway station and the school is completed with other children in the Kinokuni mini-bus sometimes driven by Shinichiro Hori himself. Akira's mother is Japanese and his father (the interviewer and writer of this article) is British. Akira's first language is Japanese but he also speaks English as a second language and so is to some extent bilingual. At home he usually speaks Japanese with his mother and English with his father. In addition to spending almost a year at Kinokuni, Akira has also visited Summerhill School on two occasions for weekends. These interviews were conducted in English.

First Interview: 1st March 1997

Q. Do you like being at Kinokuni?
A. Yes.
Q. Why do you like it?
A. Because it's a free school[1].
Q. How do you mean, free?
A. Because when you don't want to do something, you don't have to do it.
Q. What do you like to do at Kinokuni?
A. Play in the dormitory.
Q. How many children are there in the dormitory?
A. About a hundred and ten.
Q. What about where you sleep?

---

[1] Akira often uses the term 'free school', which he is translating from the Japanese 'Jiyu na Gakko' as this was the way the mini-school (his first experience of Kinokuni) is generally described.

A. In the centre. *B-To.*[2] In the centre.

Q. In the room where you sleep, how many children are there?

A. Eight.

Q. Are they both boys and girls?

A. All boys.

Q. Are they all the same age as you?

A. Just three or two or one are the same age as me and the other is nine.

Q. What time do you go to bed?

A. At nine o'clock, you can play beside the bed but not loudly. At nine-thirty you put your bed lights off and you sleep.

Q. Who puts the lights off—the children or the housemother?

A. The children.

Q. Who decided on the bedtimes—the adults or the children?

A. I don't know.

Q. What about when you first went to Kinokuni. You've been there nearly a year now. Did you like it when you first went?

A. I was a little bit sad because of Mummy, but I like it now.

Q. You were sad because you were away from Mummy?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you think you went to Kinokuni? Did you decide to go or did Mummy and Daddy decide?

A. Me. Because it's a free school[3].

Q. So is it different from other schools, do you think?

A. Yes. In different schools they have no project. We have project and you don't have to do anything you don't want.

Q. Do you think it's better then than other schools?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you first hear about Kinokuni?

A. I think six or five or four years old.

Q. Who told you about it?

A. Mummy and you. I forgot.

Q. So when you went there you missed Mummy?

A. At first.

Q. Do you miss Mummy now?

A. No.

Q. So it changed, did it?

---

[2] This means the B- numbered dormitory building. There are five dormitories at Kinokuni.

[3] In fact, as his mother has pointed out, he was a little reluctant to go to Kinokuni at first because he did not like the idea of having to sleep there all week.

A. Yes.

Q. So you like going there?

A. Yes.

Q. What I'd like you to tell me now is what you do in a day at Kinokuni. When you wake up in the morning what's the first thing you do?

A. Just lay down on the bed and I think I'll get up and do my Game Boy and somebody says 'breakfast is ready' and I go.

Q. If you sleep and you don't wake up does somebody come and wake you up?

A. Yes.

Q. A housemother or one of the other children?

A. Housemother.

Q. And then you have breakfast. So you have to walk, do you, from the dormitory to the school?

A. No, you have it in the dormitory. From nine to nine-thirty you have to go.

Q. What if you don't want to go?

A. You don't have to.

Q. Does everybody go?

A. Yes.

Q. What about you. Do you always go to lessons?

A. Yes, because after lessons and after school they have sweets and you can watch videos. It's interesting.

Q. But if you didn't want to go. If you just wanted to stay in the dormitory, would anybody get angry or would that be all right?

A. That would be all right.

Q. Then when you start lessons what do you usually do?

A. You write a story or make something with trees, that sort of thing. *Komuten*.[4] Sometimes you can write your stories or make food. Sometimes you have to learn things like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 sort of thing.

---

[4] Komuten literally means 'construction worker'. Here 'workshop' is perhaps a better translation. Komuten is one of the five areas of Project work from which children choose each term, and it includes woodwork and gardening. The five Project areas are currently as follows: Komuten, Farm, Cookery, Health, and Tanken (Exploration). The great bulk of activity at Kinokuni revolves around these Projects. In addition, pupils can do 'Choice' two or three times a week. Choice offers a large number of activities including Dance, English conversation, Drawing, Music, Woodwork, Cookery, and Outside Play Activity. In theory it is possible for a child with a passion for cookery to choose this for both Project and Choice and spend the whole time cooking.

Q. And write in Japanese?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you have the same teacher all day or different teachers?

A. All day same teachers.

Q. Who is your teacher?

A. Hori, and Maru.

Q. So they're with you all the day are they, usually?

A. Yes, but Maru, she does more bigger children.

Q. And how many children are there usually in the same room, in the class?

A. With big children too?

Q. When you do a lesson, do you have it with the same class, the same children?

A. I'm saying, I'm speaking to you, like in my class there's little children and big children. Both of them, in my class. What number? About 24 or 30.

Q. What do you do at lunchtimes?

A. Lunchtime you don't have to go. If you don't want to eat it you don't have to. Lunch you eat and then you can play for rest or choice. Not choice, lesson.

Q. What about the food at lunchtime. Is it nice?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it Japanese food or other kinds of food?

A. Sometimes *shabu-shabu*,[5] sometimes hamburger or spaghetti.

Q. In the afternoons do you do the same sort of things or different things?

A. Afternoons I play with my friends.

Q. Do you have lessons in the afternoons?

A. Yes, after break for lunch you can go to the lessons.

Q. After you finish lessons in the afternoons do you go back to the dormitory or do you play?

A. You can go to the dormitory when you like. You can go anytime to the dormitory. Before that you have to put paper you don't need inside the bin, that sort of thing, and you clear up and then you have sweets. Go back to the dormitory when you like, or watch video.

Q. You watch video in the music room, do you?

A. No, you can watch it anywhere that you like.

---

[5] A Japanese dish comprising thin slices of beef and vegetables cooked in boiling water.

Q. When do you have dinner?
A. About six or six-twenty about.
Q. After dinner, what do you do then? Do you just play?
A. You can do what you like.
Q. What about other children there. Who are your best friends?
A. Koko and Ota Ryohei-kun.
Q. What sort of things do you play with them?
A. Like pocket monster game. You can be a pocket monster and play.
Q. Where do you have the meeting at Kinokuni?
A. In the hall. Outside the project place everyone goes and have a meeting.
Q. When you have a meeting is it just for the children in that part of the school or everybody together?
A. Everybody. And somebody goes like 'somebody punched me for fun' and sort of thing, and you can say to them 'I lost my gloves, and it's a blue colour and if you find it give it back to me'. You can say.
Q. Have you ever spoken at the meeting?
A. Yes.
Q. What did you speak about. Do you remember?
A. Somebody said 'take that thing now to here'.
Q. So something you didn't like?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you say their name, who it was?
A. No.
Q. So what happened at the meeting, what did people say?
Q. You mustn't......
A. And did it stop?
Q. Yes.
Q. So you decide things at the meeting about other children that have done things you don't like?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you decide project at the meeting or is that a different meeting?
A. You can say it too. Like *Komuten*. You can say, 'on Saturday you can go to the museum free for children'. That sort of thing you can say.
Q. When is the meeting. Which day?
A. I forgot.[6]

---

[6] The meeting day has changed several times but it is now held on Thursday afternoons. In the early days of the school the meetings were noisy and chaotic. However, the recent one I attended was much

Q. Do you have other meetings, in the dormitory?

A. Yes.

Q. So what are they for?

A. For dormitory.

Q. To decide things in the dormitory?

A. Yes.

Q. What about your housemother, what's her name?

A. Doi-san.

Q. Do you see her very much, like at bedtime?

A. Yes.

Q. Does she read you a story?

A. No.

Q. What do you like to do best at Kinokuni?

A. When I go back.

Q. When you go back. What's that?

A. On the train.

Q. Going home?

A. Yes, with Koko and my friends.

Q. So going home is the best thing?

A. And play in the school.

Q. What kind of lessons do you like best?

A. Write a story.

Q. So how do you write a story?

A. There's a paper and you write a story. And you can write it with a computer too. But I don't know how to use a computer.

Q. Do you like going on trips?

A. Yes, love it.

Q. You went on one this week, didn't you?

A. Yes, I liked it.

Q. Where did you go?

A. To the sort of *onsen,* [7] sort of thing. A million people can go inside.

Q. And you stayed there one night did you?

A. Yes. And I went to that.

Q. The last thing. Can you tell me if there's anything you don't like. What do you dislike most about Kinokuni?

---

calmer and well-organized. It still seems rare though for children to 'bring each other up' as at Summerhill and the meeting is more often used for discussing school plans. As numbers at the school have rapidly increased the smaller meetings in the dormitories have grown in importance.

[7] A Japanese hot spring or spa.

A. I like Kinokuni because a free school. When somebody says to me bad thing then I don't like it.
Q. So if somebody is nasty to you then you don't like it. Does that happen much?
A. Not so much.

Second Interview: 8th March 1997

Q. What did you do at Kinokuni this week?
A. I played football and did choice and made a book, a special one.
Q. When you did football, who did you play with?
A. My friend, but I forgot his name.
Q. Do you play in that space outside?
A. Yes.
Q. In that playground outside you don't have any swings or slides do you?
A. It's not a playground, it's a ground.
Q. Would you like to have swings or slides like they've got at Summerhill?
A. They've got swings at Kinokuni too.
Q. When did they put them in?
A. You saw a sort of house. In there there's a rope. That's a sort of swing.
Q. Oh is it? I didn't know that. You've got a lot more things to do at Summerhill though, haven't you, because you've got a swimming pool and a tennis court and things like that.
A. Yes.
Q. Would you like to have more things to do at Kinokuni or do you think there's enough?
A. There's enough.
Q. You don't get bored?
A. No.[8]
Q. Are you good at football?
A. *Ma-ma.*[9]
Q. What did you do in choice?
A. One choice is you can make food. Another one is you can draw. And another one is you choose a play thing, game.
Q. Did you do all of them?

---

[8] Despite the spartan nature of the 'ground' at Kinokuni and lack of ready-made play facilities, the children do not seem bored but seem to have had a good time creating and making their own entertainments.

[9] Japanese for 'so-so'.

A. Not all of them but you have to have three choice, and do it. Not all of them.
Q. What did you like best in choice?
A. Drawing. Drawing pictures.
Q. When you draw pictures what do you like to draw?
A. Monsters.
Q. What, the Loch Ness monster?
A. No, pocket monster.
Q. You said you did football this week and you did choice. What was the third one?
A. Making a special book. But another time choice thing when I was six years old, that was football and you make not books but play and you make food.
Q. This week's special book. What was that?
A. I wrote a picture and a story.
Q. What did you write a story about?
A. Like when I'm with Daddy and that sort of story.
Q. When you write it how do you do it. Do you write it with a pencil or ask someone to write it for you?
A. I write it with a pencil.
Q. So you can write it in *hiragana* can you?
A. Yes. Or *katakana*.[10]
Q. Then what happens?
A. That one, Maru-chan typed in on the computer.
Q. Did she?
A. Yes.
Q. What picture did you do?
A. I drew the flowers and a monster, and somebody, I forgot, drew the coffee shop. Yuki-kun drew people reading some books.
Q. Is the coffee shop open just on Thursdays?
A. Different coffee shop. They have a museum. Boys and girls, children, are free. Adults just a hundred yen. So cheap.
Q. Can I come?
A. Yes. If you've got a hundred yen.
Q. What's in the museum?
A. All of the boys and girls made something like these with trees.
Q. Something from wood?
A. Yes. Because *Komuten*. I made it too. Everyone have to do it.
Q. What if you don't want to do it?
A. You can just make an easy one.

---

[10] Katakana and hiragana are the Japanese phonetic scripts first learned by children before the introduction of Chinese characters.

Q. Who do you do the *Komuten* with. Is that Hori and Maru?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you have any other teachers?

A. Sometimes Maru-chan, sometimes Hori-san.

Q. How many teachers are there at Kinokuni?

A. Wait a minute... Eight, I think. Project they have. No, wait a minute... I think there's ten. In project they have ten. My place is just ten.

Q. What about the big ones, do they have different teachers?

A. They do what they like, like make trees or learn and sometimes Hori goes to there.

Q. Do you ever play with the big ones?

A. No.[11]

Q. But you're all together at the meetings?

A. Yes.

Q. Some children go home every day, some go home at weekends like you, and some stay the whole term. Which do you think is best?

A. Just ordinary like me.

Q. Do most people go home at weekends?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you think some people stay all the term?

A. Because they like Kinokuni.

Q. Maybe they live a long way away too.

A. Yes.

Q. Last week you told me something that you liked best. Do you remember what it was?

A. Playing with somebody and making things.

Q. If you have a problem at Kinokuni can you think what that might be?

A. If I mistake when I'm making something, like with trees. I think I have a problem.

Q. If somebody is nasty to you what would you do about it?

A. I don't know.

Q. Is there anything you can do to make me stop?

A. Put it up in the meeting.

Q. Have you ever done that?

A. Just once.

Q. And they stopped doing it, did they?

A. Yes.

---

[11] Shinichiro Hori claims that in fact there is a much better relationship now between the older and younger children than there was before and that this side is improving all the time.

Q. Hori wanted to make a school in Japan which is like Summerhill. Do you think there's anything different about Kinokuni or do you think it's the same as Summerhill?

A. Same.

Q. What about the children at Summerhill. Do they all come from England?

A. No, some of them Japan, some of them French.

Q. That's right. That's different, isn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. What about Kinokuni. They're all from Japan, aren't they?

A. Yes. I think they're all from Japan.

Q. You're British and Japanese, aren't you. You're both?

A. Yes.

Q. So do the other children ever ask you about you being British, because you can speak English?

A. Yes.

Q. What do they say?

A. They say sort of nasty things like 'what is penis mean in English'.

Q. Only nasty things?

A. Sometimes no but sometimes like penis.

Q. So they just want to know about language do they? About English and Japanese language?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they know you've been to England?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they say anything about that?

A. No.

Q. When you're older would you like to stay at Kinokuni, or go to Summerhill, or go to an ordinary Japanese school, or would you like to stay at home?

A. No school.

Q. So you think no school is better than Kinokuni?

A. Kinokuni is more better.

Q. What about Summerhill, would you like to go there?

A. I don't know.

Q. Would you rather stay at home or go to Kinokuni?

A. Kinokuni.

Q. Stay at home is second?

A. Yes.

Q. Summerhill third?

A. Yes.

Q. Summerhill is too far away for you, maybe?

A. Yes.

Ron Miller, who sent us the following article, has been a very good friend of alternative education and of our school, our community and our journal for many years! A historian of holistic education beginning with the New England Transcendentalists, Ron has written several books (see advertisement on p. 34) which reflect the depth of his concern for the lives of children, beginning with* What Are Schools For?*, a pungent account and penetrating analysis of the history of education.

Founder of the periodical* Holistic Education Review*, co-founder of the Global Alliance for Transforming Education and director of the Center for Redesigning Education, which publishes an annotated catalogue of books offering what he calls "Great Ideas in Education," Ron continues to pursue his whole-hearted quest for clarity of vision in the field of children's education.

"PARTIAL VISION" IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

by Ron Miller

Our oldest son, Justin, will be starting Waldorf school this fall. It is a lively school, with a wonderful sense of community among the families, and when Justin visited the class he'll be joining he quickly felt welcomed by the warm, gentle teacher and friendly, supportive children. He seems to really like it and will probably thrive there. However, I happen to be unusually fussy when it comes to education, and I have some philosophical reservations about several aspects of Waldorf education. How do I reconcile these with my own son's positive experiences?

For the past fifteen years, I have been involved in alternative education, as a Montessori teacher, as a doctoral student in the history and philosophy of education, as the founding editor of the journal *Holistic Education Review* and the book review publication *Great Ideas in Education*, and as author or editor of four books. Throughout this time I've maintained contacts with alternative educators of every stripe—Montessori and Waldorf educators, freeschoolers, homeschoolers, progressives, anarchists, ecologists, constructivists, reconstructionists, deconstructionists, and many others. From this uncommonly broad exposure I have concluded that there is no one best model or method of education. No single approach is ideal for all young people, all families, all communities, all social and historical conditions. In my view, good education—what I have been calling "holistic" education—is not a single definable technique or method but an attitude of openness, responsiveness, and caring that adapts to the complex needs of a given time and place.

I do not believe that any one perspective can encompass all possibilities of human growth or cultural renewal, because human existence is an unfolding adventure involving many layers of reality and meaning (biological, ecological, psychological, social, historical, mythological, spiritual...). Any educational vision that claims to be a complete, perfected, or final answer to the mysteries of human existence is neglecting, if not actively repressing, legitimate avenues of development. Australian education theorist Bernie Neville expressed this point poetically through the metaphors of Greek mythology, describing the various archetypal energies (such as the authoritarian Senex, the orderly Apollo, the freedom-loving Eros) that make up the psyche. He warned that honoring any one of these forces to the exclusion of others results in a "partial vision" that is blind "to much that is significant in human living" and that conceives education "in a way that impoverishes children rather than enriches them" (1989, p. 132).

In my view, the Waldorf approach is such a "partial vision" because it is based religiously on the teachings of one man—Rudolf Steiner—who, despite being a gifted mystic and a brilliant thinker, was clearly influenced and limited by his cultural and historical context—as he himself seemed to recognize at times. In its pervasive emphasis on Spirit and Beauty and Form and similar archetypes, Waldorf education faithfully expresses the worldview of nineteenth century German idealism and neglects other energies of the psyche that find more room for expression in other worldviews. Surely Waldorf does not "impoverish" children, because its spirituality is deeply nourishing in many ways. But its idealism does close off other avenues of human development. As the Unitarian leader William Ellery Channing, a deeply spiritual man himself, told the Transcendentalist educator Bronson Alcott, "the strong passion of the young for the outward is an indication of Nature to be respected. Spirituality may be too exclusive for its own good" (quoted in Tyler, 1944, p. 248). My primary complaint about the Waldorf movement is that it offers itself as the universal ideal of education and lacks the self-criticism and openness to other perspectives that would permit flexibility and responsiveness to diverse human situations.

Before I go further with this critique, I want to make it clear that I have been drawn to Rudolf Steiner's thinking ever since I first encountered it. His spiritual idealism is such a vital and powerful antidote to the life-denying materialism of modern western culture that in my historical study of alternative education (Miller, 1990), I proposed that Waldorf education "is probably the most radically holistic approach ever attempted." If I am now, on further reflection, calling it a "partial vision," I still acknowledge that it supplies a tremendously important part that is missing, not only from mainstream public schooling, but from many alternative approaches as well. Holistic education is not whole without a spiritual foundation.

In addition, Steiner's notion of the "threefold" society, in which the cultural sphere (including education) is protected from the demands of economic and political forces, is a brilliant analysis of modern society and particularly public schooling. There could be no alternatives without educational freedom, and Waldorf educators have stated this case more coherently than anyone. I agree with educational researcher Mary E. Henry, who also appreciates Steiner's work from a critical scholarly perspective, that Waldorf education represents a concrete effort to build an entirely new culture rooted in a deeply spiritual, ecological, and organic understanding of life (Henry, 1993). We desperately need this perspective, which is often absent—or at least obscurely implicit—in alternative school movements that speak only of democracy or children's freedom (see Miller, 1995). Libertarian ideology is a partial vision, too.

As parents, this is what attracts us most to the Waldorf school; even though the public school in our small Vermont town is extremely good by conventional standards and seems highly responsive to parents and students, we know that in most ways public education represents and reinforces the culture of consumerism, competition, and materialism. At a Waldorf school, our children will not be treated as future job seekers, savvy consumers or high tech warriors in the battle against foreign competition, but as evolving spiritual beings who seek lives of meaning and beauty and inspiration. The activities that fill children's days at a Waldorf school—storytelling, art, music, creative movement, and much stimulation of the imagination—are rich and nourishing.

Still, my background in other alternative education movements informs me that the Waldorf methodology is not the only or necessarily the best expression of educational and social renewal. Alternative educational visions all reject the dominant modern conception of schooling which seeks to harness human energies to the mechanical requirements of the economic system and the state. All alternative visions are grounded in a genuine desire to support children's natural ways of learning and growth; the differences between these visions reflect their different perspectives on the complex mystery of human development. For example, Maria Montessori was, like Steiner, sensitively attuned to the different cognitive and emotional stages of children's growth, and like Steiner, she perceived that spiritual forces, not to be tampered with by modern ideologies, were at work in the unfolding of these stages. Yet her educational system reflected *her* cultural milieu and the circumstances of the children she worked with, and a Montessori classroom is consequently a very different environment.

Dee Joy Coulter*, an educational psychologist who has worked closely with both Montessori and Waldorf educators in Boulder, Colorado, once wrote a brief but important essay comparing the two approaches (1991). Emphasizing that Montessori and Steiner had indeed developed their methods in response to specific cultural needs, she asserted that their pedagogies are not so much in opposition but complementary, expressing symmetrical dimensions of human life. Coulter suggested that educators today should attend to the "seed qualities" within these visions rather than simply mimic the historically and culturally conditioned forms they took. In other words, we can appreciate an educational method as an insightful response to a particular facet of human experience, without venerating it as complete, perfect, universal or final.

Probably the most obvious and irreconcilable difference between alternative education visions is in their conflicting attitudes toward freedom and structure. Educators such as Francisco Ferrer, Caroline Pratt, John Holt, A. S. Neill, and George Dennison, and psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow have argued that if we truly trust human nature, we will allow it to find expression in a free and supportive atmosphere. Whatever the source of human dreams, desires, and impulses (these theorists have tended *not* to invoke transcendent, spiritual sources), children can demonstrate genuine responsibility, initiative, compassion, and even wisdom when their personal selfhood is allowed to emerge and proclaim itself; according to this point of view, educational techniques are artificial, and are usually barriers to meaningful growth. Thousands of homeschoolers and the

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* See the article by Coulter, "Montessori and Steiner, A Pattern of Reverse Symmetries" *Holistic Education Review* Vol. 4 No. 2 (Summer, 1991), pp. 30-32, which we reprinted in *ΣΚΟΛΕ,* Vol. XIII, No. 2, (Spring, 1997), pp. 91-95.

"democratic" schools such as Sudbury Valley have proven that there is value in this libertarian vision.

Waldorf educators, however, insist that this sort of freedom is premature and actually hinders the development of genuine personal autonomy! In a Waldorf classroom, the teacher is solidly in command of students' attention moment after moment after moment; children have little opportunity to engage in independent activities or conversations; younger children, in particular, are not encouraged to question the teacher but to imitate what he or she models. Steiner insisted that he did not advocate such discipline for the sheer sake of adult authority but because he truly believed, on the basis of his intuitive perception, that the natural development of the child's spiritual being *requires* strong adult guidance. As John F. Gardner has explained this perspective (1995), the "organism" (the material, animal aspect of human life) needs to be "cancelled" through the strengthening of "universal reason"; the spiritual realm of Mind transcends the individual ego and the task of education is to cultivate the infusion of true spiritual knowledge into the child's receptive soul.

Obviously, this is the voice of German idealism. I don't say that it is incorrect: Steiner certainly was tapping into some profound layer of reality, and the fact is that most graduates of Waldorf schools do appear to be highly creative, self-confident, autonomous, happy people. Something in their souls has most definitely been nurtured. However, given my experience with other forms of alternative education and my understanding of the social and political challenges of our culture at this time, the lockstep classroom is the aspect of Waldorf education that I find most difficult to accept. If Steiner's intuition were universally valid, then all graduates of free schools, progressive schools, and even Montessori schools would end up as rather dysfunctional individuals, and yet this is certainly not the case (Gardner claims that it is, but provides no evidence). These children's souls have *also* been nurtured, although in less explicit and perhaps less deeply "spiritual" ways. As I said above, Steiner's insights into the inherent spirituality of the unfolding human being are as rare as they are valuable, but I still cannot believe that Waldorf pedagogy so uniquely transcends all cultural/historical influence that it is the only possible way of nourishing genuinely spiritual experience.

Holistic educators such as Rachael Kessler, John P. Miller and Parker Palmer have written about the central importance of the *relationship* between teachers and students; it is not the method, not the degree of freedom or structure provided, but the qualities of openness, respect, integrity and caring that make education real and meaningful. A former Waldorf educator, Diana Cohn, expressed this view precisely in a conversation with Montessorians that I facilitated several years ago. She observed that students in alternative schools "have very loving adults working with them. The methods are very different, but the bottom line is that you have these very interested adults working with the children, and they feel that. They feel enlivened by the fact that there are these caring adults in their lives" (Cohn, et. al. 1990).

So I don't think it is a mistake to send my son to a Waldorf school, where he will be taught by caring adults who are fully dedicated to nourishing his unfolding personality.

But I wonder whether they could nourish him even more fully by not choreographing his every move and expecting quite so much imitation and recitation; I think they would nourish even more facets of his archetypal energies by allowing some initiative, some freedom of expression, some exploration of his own peculiar ideas and interests. If a Waldorf approach could incorporate these "seed qualities" from other alternatives without sacrificing its own, it would be even more radically holistic than I already find it to be. Most Waldorf educators, I am sure, would view the result as a watered-down, diminished version of their pedagogy—just as libertarian educators might scoff at the idea of introducing guided activities for cultivating imagination. It is this conflict of partial visions that holistic education seeks to reconcile.

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Once again I find myself impelled to pass on yet another brilliantly eloquent article by our beloved John Taylor Gatto. This one is a beauty! It comes to us from Michael Mendizza's Touch the Future Newsletter, *to which I urge you to subscribe. Information for doing so is at the end of the article.*

***Reprinted from* Touch The Future Newsletter:**

What Really Matters

by John Taylor Gatto

In 1990 John Taylor Gatto was selected Teacher of the Year for the City of New York. In 1991 he was chosen Teacher of the Year for the State of New York. Since that time John has become an outspoken critic of the current system of compulsory schooling. For more information see* Dumbing Us Down *and other publications by John on education and how it can be improved.

> *After 12,000 hours of compulsory training at the hands of nearly one hundred government certified and women, many high school graduates have no skills to trade for an income or even any skills with which to talk to each other. They can't change a flat, read a book, repair a faucet, calculate a batting average, install a light, follow directions for the use of a word processor, build a wall, make change reliably, be alone with themselves or keep their marriages together.*

Going to the moon didn't really matter, it turned out. I say that from the vantage point of my six decades living on Planet Earth but also because of something I saw not so long ago. It was at Booker T. Washington High School where I watched an official astronaut, a handsome, well-built black man in his prime, dressed in a silver space suit with an air of authentic command, try to get the attention of an auditorium full of Harlem teenagers. It was the Board of Education's perfect template for dramatic success, a distinguished black man leading ignorant black kids to wisdom.

He came with every tricky device and visual aid NASA could muster, yet the young audience ignored him completely. At several places in his presentation he couldn't continue for the noise. I heard some teachers say, "What do you expect from ghetto kids?" but I don't think that explained his failure at all. The kids instinctively perceived this astronaut had less control over his rocket vehicle than a bus driver has over his bus. I think they had also wordlessly deduced that any experiments he performed were someone else's idea. NASA. The Space Agency's hype was lost on them.

This man, for all his excellence, was only some other man's agent. The kids sensed that his talk, too, had been written by someone else, that he was part of what the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr called the "non-thought" of received ideas.

It was irrelevant whether this astronaut understood the significance of his experiments or not. He was only an agent, not a principal—in the same way many school teachers are only agents retailing someone else's orders. This astronaut wasn't walking his own talk but someone else's. A machine can do that.

It seems likely that my Harlem kids considered going to the moon a dumb game; obviously I didn't verify their feelings scientifically but I knew a lot of them didn't have fathers or much dignity in their lives, and about half had never eaten off a tablecloth. What was going to the moon supposed to mean to them? If you asked me that question I couldn't answer it with any confidence, and I *had* a father once upon a time... and a tablecloth, too.

If the truth were told, in my thirty years teaching in New York City, sometimes teaching prosperous white kids instead of Harlem kids, sometimes a mixed bag of middle class kids, I never heard a single student white or black speak spontaneously of the U.S. space program, or show the slightest interest in it even though the publicists of empty space filled our newspapers for a long time. And space was a hot item on the school curriculum circuit, too. When the Challenger space shuttle blew up there was a momentary flicker of curiosity, but even that passed in an instant. Going to the moon didn't matter, it turned out, though the government threw .100 billion dollars into the effort.

A lot of things don't matter that are supposed to; one of them is well-funded government schools. Saying that may be considered irresponsible by people who don't know the difference between schooling and education, I know, but over one hundred academic studies have tried to show any compelling connection between money and learning and not one has succeeded. Right from the beginning school men told us that money would buy results and we all believed it. So, between 1960 and 1992 the U. S. tripled the number of constant dollars given to schools. Yet after

12,000 hours of government schooling, one out of five Americans can't read the directions on a medicine bottle.

After 12,000 hours of compulsory training at the hands of nearly one hundred government certified men and women, many high school graduates have no skills to trade for an income or even any skills with which to talk to each other. They can't change a flat, read a book, repair a faucet, calculate a batting average, install a light, follow directions for the use of a word processor, build a wall, make change reliably, be alone with them selves or keep their marriages together. The situation is considerably worse than journalists have discerned. I know, because I lived in it for 30 years as a teacher.

> *"I don't know how to do anything except pass tests. If the fan belt on my car broke on a lonely road in a snowstorm I'd freeze to death. Why have you done this to me?"*

Last year at Southern Illinois University I gave a workshop in what the basic skills of a good life are as I understand them. Toward the end of it a young man rose in back and shouted at me: "I'm 25 years old, I've lived a quarter of a century, and I don't know how to do anything except pass tests. If the fanbelt on my car broke on a lonely road in a snowstorm I'd freeze to death. Why have you done this to me?"

He was right. I was the one who did it just as much as any other teacher who takes up the time young people need to find out what really matters. I did it innocently and desperately, trying to make a living and keep my dignity, but nevertheless I did it by being an agent of a system whose purpose has little to do with what kids need to grow up right.

My critic had two college degrees, it turned out, and his two degrees were shrieking at me that going to school doesn't matter very much even if it gets you a good job. People who do very well in schools as we've conceived them have much more than their share of suicides, bad marriages, family problems, unstable friendships, feelings of meaninglessness, addictions, failures, heart bypasses that don't work and general bad health. These things are very well-documented but most of us can intuit them need for verification. If school is something that hurts you, what on earth are we allowing it for?

Does going to school matter if it uses up all the time you need to learn to build a house? If a 15-year old kid was allowed to go to the Shelter Institute in Bath, Maine, he would be taught to build a beautiful post-and-beam Cape Cod home in three weeks, with all the math and calculations that entails; and if he stayed another three weeks he'd learn how to install a sewer system, water, heat and electric.

If any American dream is universal, owning a home is it—but few government schools bother teaching you how to build one. Why is that? Everyone thinks a home matters. Does going to school matter if it uses up the time you need to start a business, to learn to grow vegetables, to explore the world or make a dress? Or if it takes away time to love your family? What matters in a good life? The things that matter in a bad life, we know, are: gaining power over others, accumulating as much stuff as you can, getting revenge on your enemies (who are everywhere), and drugging yourself one way or another to forget the pain of not quite being human. School teaches most kids how to strive for a bad life and succeeds at this so well that most of our government machinery eventually falls into the hands of people who themselves are living bad lives. We're all in deep trouble because of that. It's the best reason I know to keep the machinery of government just as weak and as primitive as possible as soon as we figure out how.

And, from the preamble to each issue of TTFN:

Our newsletter is published four times a year, spring, summer, fall and winter. Past issues have featured Ashley Montague, Joseph Chilton Pearce, David Bohm, John Taylor Gatto, Chuck Hogan, James Prescott, Suzanne Arms and many others. Our goal is to share information that raise deep questions regarding human development, education, learning and appropriate uses of media and technology.

We send our newsletter, free of charge, to those who wish to be on our mailing list. There are no dues or subcription fees. If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter, we ask that ou confirm your interest with the special envelope we enclosed with our fall issue, or by phone, fax, e-mail. If you don't confirm your renewed interest we Jill assume that you wish to have your name removed from our list.

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Some flies can by caught with, well, not vinegar, exactly, but by provocation, I guess. Honey didn't do it, as you will see as per the following exchange via e-mail.

I've been pursuing this "shy person," (who probably needs powdermilk biscuits about as much as Garrison Keeler does, since shyness is an inner experience that is subjectively real but often without an objective basis) ever since I read a transcript of a keynote speech he gave to the National Organization of Small Schools years back. John Potter is in reality a brilliat educator who started and ran an interracial alternative school called Somerset School in Washington, DC, for a number of years and then founded and currently directs a school called the New School of Northern Virginia, the integrity of which, under John's powerful leadership, has been attested to by at least one awe-stricken father (see ΣΚΟΛΕ, Vol. XI, No. 1, Winter, 1994, pp. 10-12, "From an Assistant Director's Desk: We're Talking Serious Ownership Here," by Vic Kryston). You may look at John's school on the Internet at:

http://www.nsnva.pvt.k12.va.us.

IMPATIENCE

by John Potter,

Head of the New School of Northern Virginia

The interchange via e-mail began with a reproach to me from John for being "impatient" with him for not writing me a ΣΚΟΛΕ article. My reply:

From: MarySKOLE@aol.com
To: jpotter@nsnva.pvt.k12.va.us

BUT JOHN! HOW you can characterize me as IMPATIENT blows me AWAY! I bet it's been six or seven years I've been waiting patiently for SOMETHING! You DID write, bug me, bug me, bug me. But I only mentioned it ONCE! Twice? Whew, what a copout! Let's have a bit of that SERIOUS OWNERSHIP Vic Kryston is so awed by! Hey, I need an "emoticon" here to soften the impact of this otherwise bald and and uninteresting narrative, or whatever Pooh Bah says.

Love, Mary

[Note: for readers who are not familiar with e-mail jargon, an "emoticon" is a "happy face" cartoon rendered with keyboard symbols thus: <:) to illustrate the missing feeling tone of written communications. This happy face can be modified to express other accompanying feelings such as a joke: <;) (one eye winking); angry feelings: >:) (the mouth turned down): >;) (a winking evil or sarcastic face); or, (if you wear glasses), <8). Not being familiar with this neologism, John misread "emoticon" as "emotion." Somehow this seems to have helped to open the introspective floodgates of his inner passion, with the following magnificent results]:

From: jpotter@nsnva.pvt.k12.va.us
To: MarySKOLE@aol.com

Mary, this is sometimes the best way for me to write:

Being stuck says something....
It gnaws, aggravates and nags me
—Obviously has something to do with something
Which
I
can't
identify
But you give me a clue
When you say
Hey,
"I need an emotion here"
I don't like that
yet it feels right—gotta pull the plug
and get something moving.

I have no new ideas
I want to say something earth shattering
about what has become of my life
getting kids of all ages to
take charge
be confident
be compassionate
to move in a strong and classy way
in their own direction
to find their own success

But thats what all of us want to do.
The fire that drives me
Is the memory of my own slow and stumbling

path to self respect.
There are much easier ways
than mine.

I feel like an organism which has
oh so haltingly risen from the primal seas
and evolved to belly flop on land
and then grow legs
to move a little better.
Sometime along the way it occurred to me
that if I stood up I could do a lot more
(including writing!)
if my hands were free.
And so I grew into a naked ape
clothed myself, and saw that finally, I fit.

I looked around and saw
my history
repeating itself
everywhere.

I couldn't stand it
I had to do something
There as no option but to educate
(for want of a better word)
No option but to see what I could do to help others up.

And I suppose it really doesn't matter whether I am
the first
or the best
or the fifth
or mediocre
or even last
because I simply want children to find
purpose
and peace
discipline
and direction

Maybe that's why it is hard to write
because even though I am proud and pleased
things aren't perfect,
I am an idealist and always fall short
of something........

Yet I want people to know.
Yes, I really want people to know
what I, and those around me have done.

When outsiders take a look,
they often see it better that I do.
I am so close to what I do
I can't see the lawn for the grass
(I just couldn't say "forest for the trees")

I do get excited hearing what I say to others
Yup, just hearing myself
makes me think "Hey, that's right,
write that down"

I have thought that
writing this way, is probably
the only way I could write.........
.......in a way that seems to capture
what I want.

It took a little nerve to send you an e-mail in this form
but, because you rattled my cage
and because I so want to get this stuff down.
Might it work?

Thank you, Mary Leue.

Thank YOU, John Potter!!! Yours is the kind of pure "soul suffering" so many people simply refuse to allow out! Some even refuse to allow it IN!
And this leads right into the next article, by our "soul brother" Bill Kaul, so just keep on readin', y'all!

I hope by now you've begun to recognize the soul stuff underneath Bill Kaul's occasional ironic self-references. Poets do have licenses not shared by us more prosaic folks:

REFLECTIONS AND KARMIC PUKE, #547

by Bill Kaul

PO Box 698, Waterflow, New Mexico

Please remember the years, and watch the children as they change from ones in need of vision and cairns into critics and life-building acquisitors...

I say this because I recall youth, and I see a trail of dirt, maybe red clay in spots and gravel or root-graven dirt, moving like a snake through hills. I see sexual encounters, and I see parents watching fearfully over dope-smoked eyes and amphetamine-twitching legs and arms and fearful night watches at the bedside of the Quaalude Kid.

Out, anywhere out of this world! says Baudelaire, as if it were possible. Death as a door, or unconsciousness as an escape, sleep as a blanket for the aching soul, the warming tool for those who stand accused by life—no meaning, or reason to provide a Band-Aid for the idea of God and Judgment... Bontzyhe the Silent, suffering a thousand travails in silence, utterly without complaint, stands at the Throne of God finally and hears the accuser: He Said Nothing. Even When Tormented With My Worst Arrows, He Said Nothing. And God gives Bontzyhe the Silent anything at all in Heaven as a reward for his quiet and humble acceptance of the yoke of Satan, and what does Bontzyhe want? He wants a fresh hot roll with butter!

I can understand that, sort of—one gives up the I-dentity here on earth, the schizophrenic ramble, cracking words open to reveal conspiracies—the I dentity, the dental I, the teeth of Self, biting, tearing teeth and bleeding gums—but don't say it too often I-dentity, I dentity, or the psych police come and want to give you back a safe and sane Identity sans hyphen. Probably a good thing.

Because, who knows about love—? The silent one, without judgment, full of mercy and empty of selfish desires? Or the one who argues and delivers reasoned criticism, takes sides and points out faults? Love as a construct of pain and tolerance and erasure. Erasure of memory and no simple transactions; you love me, so it is reasonable to expect... I love you, so I will... and the extortion rate soars as interest, unpaid and compounded daily, grows as a cancer on what could be beautiful, a sore spot on an apple, like a bruise, only when touched the fruit screams and falls splattering to earth.

Who knows about societies, and expectations? When the man dies, having worked and eaten and labored and whined and accepted and explained and begged all his life, when his corpse is blessed or pickled and tossed into the ground, or laid gently, when there are no more mourners, no matter how good the man and how gracious his deeds, then who will send the rain from Heaven—? Who will watch, is who will know. There are no eyes to see, no ears to hear... tongues as hard and stiff as wood, having tried to explain the fear for too many years.

It seems that pain is present, and we point to it: it hurts here. And then we feel pleasure and we cannot point to it. Not here. Perhaps here.

But pain and pleasure are carried along the same neural pathways, I am told by physiologists. They also tell me that I began life as a female undifferentiated mass of cells, and that I have triggers in my cells waiting to tell my body to die.

I listen to these stories, and I listen to the stories of Coyote and the stories of the Berenstain Bears and Dr. Seuss and The Beatles and the miraculous stories found in Holy Scriptures. These stories, the ones that are simple and true, the ones I am told by Old Winos From Acoma, these ring in my face... they explain, but they also make my arrow stick in Zeno's target.

The faces of the children, so soon. Too soon. Their wants and needs. A long list of options for fathers, choose how you will live, how you will provide... you are Provider, it is told in the stories, it's written on your cells the same as the mechanism that awakens and says Die, You Want Out Sonofabitch?

And we are glad to close our eyes, but then don't want to leave. Pressure applied from all sides, gently at first, and then stridently like crab-pincers: This Is Your Function. This Was Your Father and His Father. This is your father in heaven, providing, always providing or being asked to provide. How God must Scream, and create new worlds, or perhaps it's a Soft Moan, a Chuckle, or a Simple Imperative. I long to hear It.

I don't have a father on earth now. Father Sky is above. Father God is in the books. I have impressions, and pictures, memories and phrases etched in tar under a blazing sun: I wish those people wouldn't drive after they smoke mullet! The Bulgarian Perversion, too horrible to mention, no one can talk about it. Quiet. Face to face. Through smoked glass, into a dim tavern full of ghostly faces.

Perhaps that is what there is to look forward to: a swift demise followed by a gathering in a ghostly tavern, an old pub full of dim and vaporous faces—ones that zoom in and become recognizable, spoken to—and ales and beers and no alcoholism, pipes full of tobacco smelling like grandfather and smoky cabins in the woods.

A vision: this is your life. No matter how hard you try to be your father's son, you will always fall short: you are The Fuck-up. The Schlemiel. So poor you are called Rothschild, looking at the fat slick faces chewing expensive foods..,

But it is OK. God will not ask why you were not Moses, why you were not Rothschild. God will ask if you were. Your money won't spend in Heaven, in the ghostly tavern there are no tabs, and no pick-ups. The silent and the humble soak in waves and pools of God's Good Water, and the meek inherit the earth and the poor in spirit are blessed.

If so, I would do well to stop talking, remain silent, and stick to business: namely, what is in front of me, what is on God's Agenda To Love Your Neighbor as Yourself. That is the whole Law: The Rest is Commentary.

? True or False:

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This article from Down East *magazine for December, 1996, came from Em Pariser, whose Community School in Camden, Maine, is doing so much to provide a model for turning around what is missing in our public schools—namely, heart, soul, down-to-earth competence and the pursuit of one's goal with patient persistence and humility!*

It Takes ACommunity

by Sarah .Scott

With photographs by Benjamin Magro

Two crusading educators have invested twenty-four years in building a unique model school for teenagers in Camden, but they are first to admit they couldn't have done it alone.

A few blocks up the road from the high-end boutiques of Camden, beyond the meticulously maintained campus of the MBNA credit-card company, is a rambling old clapboard farmhouse with a pair of vintage, vinyl-covered chairs on its front porch and a handful of cars out front. Teenagers come and go through its front door. A small group of kids roughhouse in the yard, and a few others wander off downtown to smoke cigarettes before school begins. A small sign above the porch reads: The Community School.

A stranger happening upon the place might wonder what community the school serves exactly. It looks more like a residence than an educational institution. Camden-Rockport High is less than a mile away, and the kids on the porch are obviously too old and from the looks of things too wise to the world to be in grammar school. In fact, the Community School is the only learning establishment of its kind in the nation, a groundbreaking alternative school for high-school dropouts. Now entering its twenty-fourth year the school has enjoyed a great deal of success, largely due to the talents, perseverance, and inspiration shown by founders Dora Lievow and Emanuel Pariser. But the dynamic couple would be the first to tell you that they couldn't have made it this far, and couldn't continue to thrive, without the hands-on help of their Camden neighbors.

"One of the goals of the school is to establish a sense of community, within the school as well as in the surrounding community," says Emanuel Pariser, a gentle-faced man with unruly hair and a beard. "That's really part of the essence of the school, to get people to see that they are connected. Our physical location is critical to that. Most of the kids had problems fitting in at school and in their communities. They had trouble feeling that they belonged and were important."

We view learning as something that can happen in school and out of school, in both formal and informal settings, says Dora Lievow, settling herself in a large overstuffed chair in the school's living room. A soft-spoken, petite woman with long, slightly graying hair, she explains, "Our public education system focuses almost entirely on in-school, formal learning, but real learning is the informal kind that takes place around the clock."

And the C-School, as students refer to it, is a virtual laboratory for round- the-clock learning. The school's program consists of six months of one-on-one academic tutoring five nights a week; coursework in "life skills" such as conflict resolution, cooking, parenting and sexuality; group living in close quarters; and the responsibility of holding down a job in the community to help pay for room and board. Only eight students are accepted for each term, sometimes competing with more than forty applicants from all over Maine Once accepted, these teenagers take on a heavy workload, but they receive boundless individualized attention and an 80% percent chance of eventually getting their diploma. In the past two decades, more than 300 kids have gone through the rigorous program.

Throughout the C-School, floor-to-ceiling bookcases are filled with volumes ranging from *Our Bodies, Our Selves* to history books on South Africa, to plays by Shakespeare. The walls are plastered with information on quitting smoking, protection from HIV, elaborate chore charts that divvy up household responsibilities, and witty cartoons that have been clipped and posted over the years. In the school's small kitchen, students Jade and Adam are preparing dinner for the rest of the group, and other students are filtering in from their day jobs working with landscaping outfits, at MBNA, or at the local supermarket. One student, currently unemployed, sits at the dining room table discussing his options with teacher Jeff Reardon, who taught in a Catholic school and ran an environmental education center in Michigan before returning to his native Maine three years ago.

"It's the relationships with the staff that form the basis of a student's commitment to the program," says Reardon later. "The place is small enough that you can't have a dishonest relationship with anyone." Individualized, student-centered learning is at the core of the school's philosophy—not unlike the old one-room school, as Pariser says—and kids get several hours of it a day from teachers like Reardon and from Lievow and volunteer tutors.

The academic program in fact thrives on volunteerism from community members, who lend their expertise in disciplines ranging from nursing and gardening to Zen meditation and video production. "It so expands what we can do if we look at everything the community has to teach," says Lievow. "Subjects can be anything a volunteer knows something about from existentialism to Egyptian history. Occasionally we'll have a cooking tutor, we've had photography tutors, African drumming.... " Tutors work an average of two hours weekly, Lievow says. "It really is an extensive contribution. And we have other volunteers who work less directly with kids," she notes. An active board of directors made up of area residents helps shape the curriculum, raise funds, and nurture relations between the school and the town, smoothing over the inevitable disciplinary problems.

Dora Lievow

It took some time for Camden to get to know and appreciate the unusual new school in its midst, according to Pariser. When Pariser and Lievow, then married, first opened the C-School with just one drop-out student back in 1973, many area residents were worried that the school would bring troublemakers to the neighborhood. Over the years, those concerns have faded away and a respect has been forged. Says Pariser:

"One of the great things about Maine—and that includes folks around here—is that you'll be accepted if you prove yourself. We proved ourselves." "Like our students, we learned by doing," says Lievow. "In the early years we had very few rules and quite a turnover of kids." But the pair was obviously on to something. In one year's time, the school had gained recognition from the State of Maine as a private secondary school. The program's ability to take teens that the system viewed as :failures" and help them find success in school, jobs, and relationships helped it win both state and private funding, and despite some early battles with the town over zoning, the school gradually came to be an accepted institution in Camden. Today a staff of six works with sixteen high-school dropouts each year.

Emanuel Pariser

So integrated has the school become in town, says Pariser, that it's now receiving a marked increase in applications from Camden residents in addition to the pile it gets from across the state. "That speaks to several things," he says. "The image that Camden projects isn't the reality of what goes on for some kids in Camden." The kids come from diverse backgrounds and all socioeconomic levels, from well-heeled, yacht-clubbing families in Camden to the potato farms of Caribou; the one thing they all have in common is their personal decision to attend the school.

The only other generalization one can make about students is that "they are all non-traditional learners," Pariser explains. For whatever reason they did not learn well in the atmosphere of the traditional high school." Many have struggled with drug and alcohol abuse. Some have learning disabilities; others, like seventeen-year-old Jade Arn from Camden, are extremely bright youngsters who felt bored and boxed-in by the rigidity of public school.

As developed by Emanuel Pariser and Dora Lievov, the Community School's reliance on student-centered one-on-one learning distinguishes it from conventional high schools. Students work closely with staff virtually around the clock. "The intimacy is the hardest part of the program, " says Pariser. "But that's what makes it work."

Through eighth grade, Arn was in the Camden school system's gifted and talented program. But by high school she lost motivation and interest in her studies. "I left school for Christmas vacation my junior year and never went back," she says. "I was getting real bored with being treated like a child and being asked to jump through their hoops." More than halfway through the C-School program, she'll sit down with Lievow tonight and discuss Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* as part of a self-designed course in existentialist literature. Although Arn may gripe about her food-service job or the curfew and other rules that structure the C-School program, she doesn't regret her decision to attend the school. "I honestly think coming here was one of the best decisions I ever made. I was stuck and spinning my wheels," she says. "Now I'm experiencing things like never before—living with seven of my peers, paying rent, cleaning."

With its fourteen-hour days and intense living arrangements the C-School program is by no means a six-month cakewalk. Nor is it cheap. Tuition for one student for six months is $17,000 paid through a combination of state funds from the Office of Substance Abuse and the Department of Corrections, private donations, money from the students' families and the weekly fifty-dollar payments for room and board that the students make to the school out of their own earnings.

It's no accident that the Community School is smack dab in the middle of Camden.

It's no accident that the Community School is smack dab in the middle of Camden. Emanuel Pariser takes the small academy's moniker seriously. "Maine and other rural states have made a mistake by consolidating many of their less populous schools and moving them to greener pastures at the edge of town," he says. Yes, schools can spread out a bit in these wide open spaces, but they lose the vitality of being in proximity to the rest of a community. "I don't think it's a good trade," he asserts. "It's essential to the idea of the C-School," he explains, "to be within walking distance of the kids' jobs and to have neighbors. "And," he says, "no school should have more than 300 or 400 kids."

Pariser thinks of the school as providing "uncles and aunts" to the students and notes that it is the school's firm commitment to help graduates of the program with their ongoing job and educational and personal issues no matter how long ago they graduated. "The intimacy is the hardest part of the program," says Pariser. "But it's what makes it work."

Over the years the C-School has faced some skepticism for the relatively small number of students it takes on and for its hefty price tag. "The C-School helps turn kids around through intense, individualized attention," says board member Peter Sexton. "The cost of taking people at this level is very high—it's not a boot camp." He insists that the school "is a viable model even though it only treats sixteen students per year. The school is training other educators who are looking for a model." Indeed, the C-School has drawn attention from educators around the country and been featured in several national publications. The school's small-scale approach is "precisely why it could be a model," adds Pariser. A lot of kids are slipping through the proverbial cracks in big schools. "There's a whole group of teenagers out there who are really disconnected and they need to belong, to feel connected. Mother Theresa put it best when she was asked how she was going to help the millions she was not dealing with. Well, one by one," she said. I don't know where I got that quote, but I've always liked it."

Community meal at the C-school

Typically, at least one of the eight students who start each term doesn't finish the semester in the first six months, and the school maintains an active outreach program to help kids finish in whatever time frame they need. Of the more than 300 teenagers who have attended the C-School over the years, 30 percent have gone on to college, while others have focused on productive working lives and raising families.

More than once, someone has commented in Camden on the seeming anomaly of an alternative high school located in a town known more for its lovely homes, its yacht-filled harbor, and its resort trade than for its problem kids. But Pariser says there's a lot more to the community than can be seen on the surface. A group of benefactors from the town have quietly supported the school over the years, shoring it up when times were tough. The teacher runs through a list of names, among them some of the town's most prominent citizens. "There have been many people from Camden who have stood solidly behind us through thick and thin. It's been really critical.

"Camden is directly involved in the school in many ways," agrees longtime board member Peter Sexton. "The town turns out in numbers for the annual auction fund-raiser." This event gives people who aren't particularly wealthy a chance to make a small donation to the school, and merchants donate goods and services for the auction."

"The school's not just about Dora and Emanuel," says Bernice Berger, a local businesswoman and former public school teacher who has served on the board of the Community School for twelve years. "There's a certain magic they have, but there are lots of very special people involved that have that magic also. Camden is made up of many different types of people. The town can handle just about anything. In the heart of Camden there's a lot of good will."

The following poems, sent to us by Emanuel Pariser, were written by Lynette Duguay, a C-School student who is about to graduate.

Fear is the Root of my Distortion of Thought

I have been given a choice
the choice to decipher, acknowledge,
and think about each moment.

Every action
every thought
every step,
is filled with thousands of choices.

Like a child
I still depend on others
where is my crutch in moments of mass confusion?

My thoughts are a kaleidoscope of colors
they entwine, they smear, they blur my vision
rarely do they create a beautiful organized pattern

they race one another,
trampel over on another,
and knock the heros down,
and no one thought ever wins.

Perplexed
confused
highly unamused
what does my fast paced, kaleidoscope replaced,
blurry laced mind do?

1/31/97

Conquering Fear

Goodby daisy blue
goodby sweet, sweet searching song
goodby old friend
goodby dependent loath.
I say goodby
so hop aboard.

don't give me anymore cries
of your poor mouthed lies.
believe me,
I know who really lives inside

take these ribbions from my hair
strip the plastic souls from feet,
and lift this weight of errie depression
that you have strapped to my back
for it belongs to you.
Take your fruitless things and go.

Sweet, sweet sorrow, searching, summer, song,
take your bitter love
take the man who stabbed you

for you relish him with dire need,
and despise him enough to trampel over his existence,
and gash diseased vulgarities out all over his name

You are a child who had not yet learned to forgive.
You have been saturated in subtle deceptive sin.

You are aware
yet still resume on this perilous road
fear pushes you away from truth
fear captures the realities of everyday life
giving you everything but freedom

your eyes have been blinded
the light you see is fire in disguise
the light you see,
is the devils eyes.

Depart from me,
sweet searching song
and take your fruitless things
for there is no room for you or them,
in this place where I now live.

1/30/97

Physical Fear: Never Again

I am not a doll to be toyed with
my parts are not meant to be fiddled with.
My actions are silent
scared inside.

I would love to kick you and all the rest,
and bellow out what you are,
but when you are here I am frózen
all I can do is be still
while my insides are squirming and screaming,
while my parts are being toyed with,
like a rubber made doll.

Never again
Never again will I be touched by another
Never again will I feel guilty
for all the wrong that is being done to me.

I am a women.
Strong and Bold
I am a women who speaks of truth
I will shout it out,
claw it out,
rip it out.

I will take fear by its ears
and twist it so it can no longer hear,
I will scratch out its eyes -
and it will no longer see,
I will rip out its soul
and it will no longer feel.

1/19/96

Fear of Society

Trapped in my hand made cocoon
separated from my brothers and sisters
I am alone
strung up high
cold in my desolate hibernation
my growth has been frozen.
What will I conceive to be?
My shell is wearing thin
others can see through
they try to poke in
but I scared and frozen pretend I am invisible
they look up at me from were my fantasies drip
and try to catch a voice
but I sheltered and mild lonely and meek
see only harmful enemies constantly attacking me.

What chance do they have?
there demons in my eye
they have been depicted and ripped apart
just as they have done to me

what chance do I have?
my skin is decrepid and surely decaying
the disease is constantly spreading
what chance do I have?

2/3/97

Understanding the Anxiety of Fear

The complexity of the secret
is the simple reality of you.
Who cares if you didn't make it to the top
you went as far as your own desires could carry you.

Why waste precious moments on past regrets:
on assumed realities
on the thoughts of others.

Stop searching for love
you knock at its disguised door daily
but do you know who your looking for?

Love is not worry
love is not the lust of a "nice guy"
love is not the solution to loneliness,
cause to the lonely love is a need
to the lonely, love is a seduction.
Simple thought turns to complexity once again
the fear to speak
the fear to be silent
the fear to express
the fear to tame your mind as your own creature
you have the will to be a lion

so conquer the fear and be king for a day
fight for the sake of instinct

Life,
yours to live freely and upon
screw society
this thought belongs to you.

2/10/97

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THE DIFFERENT DRUM:
Community Making and Peace
by M. Scott Peck, M.D.

This seemed a propitious time (and place, coming right after the Community School writings!) to reprint a selection from Scott Peck's book on community, The Different Drum, *seeing how isolated families are feeling, and how great is their longing for mutual support and cooperation. Community doesn't come easily to us, just because we feel its lack!*

M. Scott Peck is a psychiatrist and author of several best-selling books on relationship and community including The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth *(Simon and Schuster, 1978),* People of the Lie: the Hope for Healing Human Evil *(Simon and Schuster, 1983), and* The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace *(Simon and Schuster, 1987).*

What follows is Scott Peck's chapter on the essential nature of community, which I find tremendously insightful, coming as it does from personal experience. Peck's perspective is that of a committed Christian, but as he himself points out, his Christian basis is only one among many, community being inclusive rather than exclusive. In what follows, other perspectives will emerge. It is to be hoped that Peck's Christian metaphor will not be a deterrent to the receiving of his message for more "secular" readers. There is no inherent reason it should be!

Peck's analysis of community-building is that any group of individuals that wishes to grow into a community undergoes four stages which he calls "pseudo-community," "chaos," "emptiness," and finally, true community. The similarity to the individual stages through which "free school" children go (as Neill pointed out occurred at Summerhill) is to me striking. It certainly fits what we ourselves have experienced in the Free School—and in the community. Would-be new members of the community in the end always come up against them—and not everyone can allow the process to go to completion!

CHAPTER III
The True Meaning of Community

In our culture of rugged individualism—in which we generally feel that we dare not be honest about ourselves, even with the person in the pew next to us—we bandy around the word "community." We apply it to almost any collection of individuals—a town, a church, a synagogue, a fraternal organization, an apartment complex, a professional association—regardless of how ment complex, a professional association—regardless of how poorly those individuals communicate with each other. It is a false use of the word.

If we are going to use the word meaningfully we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to "rejoice together, mourn together," and to "delight in each other, make others' conditions our own." But what, then, does such a rare group look like? How does it function? What is a true definition of community?

We can define or adequately explain only those things that are smaller than we are. I have in my office, for instance, a very handy little electrical space heater. If I were an electrical engineer, I could take it apart and explain to you—define exactly how it works. Except for one thing. That is the matter of the cord and plug that connect it with something called electricity. And there are certain questions about electricity, despite its known physical laws, that even the most advanced electrical engineer cannot answer. That is because electricity is something larger than we are.

There are many such "things": God, goodness, love, evil, death, consciousness, for instance. Being so large, they are many-faceted, and the best we can do is describe or define one facet at a time. Even so, we never seem quite able to plumb their depths fully. Sooner or later we inevitably run into a core of mystery.

Community is another such phenomenon. Like electricity, it is profoundly lawful. Yet there remains something about it that is inherently mysterious, miraculous, unfathomable. Thus there is no adequate one-sentence definition of genuine community. Community is something more than the sum of its parts, its individual members. What is this "something more?" Even to begin to answer that, we enter a realm that is not so much abstract as almost mystical. It is a realm where words are never fully suitable and language itself falls short.

The analogy of a gem comes to mind. The seeds of community reside in humanity—a social species—just as a gem originally resides in the earth. But it is not yet a gem, only a potential one. So it is that geologists refer to a gem in the rough simply as a stone. A group becomes a community in somewhat the same way that a stone becomes a gem—through a process of cutting and polishing. Once cut and polished, it is something beautiful. But to describe its beauty, the best we can do is to describe its facets. Community, like a gem, is multifaceted, each facet a mere aspect of a whole that defies description.

One other caveat. The gem of community is so exquisitely beautiful it may seem unreal to you, like a dream you once had when you were a child, so beautiful it may seem unattainable. As Bellah and his coauthors put it, the notion of community "may also be resisted as absurdly Utopian, as a project to create a perfect society. But the transformation of which we speak is both necessary and modest. Without it, indeed, there may be very little future to think about at all."[1] The problem is that the lack of community is so much the norm in our society, one without experience would be tempted to think, How could we possibly get there from here? It is possible; we *can* get there from here. Remember that to the uninitiated eye it would seem impossible for a stone ever to become a gem.

The facets of community are interconnected, profoundly interrelated. No one could exist without the other. They create each other, make each other possible. What follows, then, is but one scheme for isolating and naming the most salient characteristics of a true community.

INCLUSIVITY, COMMITMENT AND CONSENSUS

Community is and must be inclusive. The great enemy of community is exclusivity. Groups that exclude others because they are poor or doubters or divorced or sinners or of some different race or nationality are not communities; they are cliques—actually defensive bastions against community.

Inclusiveness is not an absolute. Long-term communities must invariably struggle over the degree to which they are going to be inclusive. Even short-term communities must sometimes make that difficult decision. But for most groups it is easier to exclude than include. Clubs and corporations give little thought to being inclusive unless the law compels them to do so. True communities, on the other hand, if they want to remain such, are always reaching to extend themselves. The burden of proof falls upon exclusivity. Communities do not ask "How can we justify taking this person in?" Instead the question is "Is it at all justifiable to keep this person out?" In relation to other groupings of similar size or purpose, communities are always relatively inclusive.

In my first experience of community at Friends Seminary, the boundaries between grades, between students and teachers, between young and old, were all "soft." There were no Outgroups—no outcasts. Everyone was welcome at the parties. There was no pressure to conform. So the inclusiveness of any community extends along all its parameters. There is an "allness" to community. It is not merely a matter of including different sexes, races and creeds. It is also inclusive of the full range of human emotions. Tears are as welcome as laughter, fear as well as faith. And different styles: hawks and doves, straights and gays, Grailers and Sears, Roebuckers [*Note: these latter terms refer to an account of the effect on everyone in one of the groups of which Peck was a member of an ideological split that arose between two very different life-style subgroups within the group as a whole, creating much exclusionary negativity until its basis in defensive prejudice became apparent to everyone.*] , the talkative and the silent. All human differences are included. All "soft" individuality is nurtured.

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[1] Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1985), p. p. 286.

How is this possible? How can such differences be absorbed, such different people coexist? Commitment—the willingness to coexist—is crucial. Sooner or later, somewhere along the line (and preferably sooner), the members of a group in some way must commit themselves to one another if they are to become or stay a community. Exclusivity, the great enemy to community, appears in two forms: excluding the other and excluding yourself. If you conclude under your breath, "Well, this group just isn't for me—they're too much this or too much that—and I'm just going to quietly pick up my marbles and go home," it would be as destructive to community as it would be to a marriage were you to conclude, "Well, the grass looks a little greener on the other side of the fence, and I'm just going to move on." Community, like marriage, requires that we hang in there when the going gets a little rough. It requires a certain degree of commitment. It is no accident that Bellah et al. subtitled their work *Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Our individualism must be counterbalanced by commitment.

If we do hang in there, we usually find after a while that "the rough places are made plain." A friend correctly defined community as a "group that has learned to transcend its individual differences." But this learning takes time, the time that can be bought only through commitment. "Transcend" does not mean "obliterate" or "demolish." It literally means "to climb over." The achievement of community can be compared to the reaching of a mountaintop.

Perhaps the most necessary key to this transcendence is the appreciation of differences. In community, instead of being ignored, denied, hidden, or changed, human differences are celebrated as gifts. Remember how I came to appreciate Lily's "gift of flowing," and she my "gift of organization [*his wife, also mentioned in an earlier chapter*]." Marriage is, of course, a small, long-term community of two. Yet in short-term communities of even fifty or sixty, while the timing and depth are almost opposite, I have found that the dynamics are the same. The transformation of attitudes toward each other that allowed Lily and me to transcend our differences took twenty years. But this same transcendence can routinely occur within a community-building group over the course of eight hours. In each case alienation is transformed into appreciation and reconciliation. And in each case the transcendence has a good deal to do with love.

We are so unfamiliar with genuine community that we have never developed an adequate vocabulary for the politics of this transcendence. When we ponder on how individual differences can be accommodated, perhaps the first mechanism we turn to (probably because it is the most childlike) is that of the strong individual leader. Differences, like those of squabbling siblings, we instinctively think can be resolved by a mommy or daddy—a benevolent dictator, or so we hope. But community, encouraging individuality as it does, can never be totalitarian. So we jump to a somewhat less primitive way of resolving individual differences which we call democracy. We take a vote, and the majority determines which differences prevail. Majority rules. Yet that process excludes the aspirations of the minority. How do we transcend differences in such a way as to include a minority? It seems like a conundrum. How and where do you go beyond democracy?

In the genuine communities of which I have been a member, a thousand or more group decisions have been made and I have never yet witnessed a vote. I do not mean to imply that we can or should discard democratic machinery, any more than we should abolish organization. But I do mean to imply that a community, in transcending individual differences, routinely goes beyond even democracy. In the vocabulary of this transcendence we thus far have only one word: "consensus." Decisions in genuine community are arrived at through consensus, in a process that is not unlike a community of jurors, for whom consensual decision-making is mandated.

Still, how on earth can a group in which individuality is encouraged, in which individual differences flourish, routinely arrive at consensus? Even when we develop a richer language for community operations, I doubt we will ever have a formula for the consensual process. The process itself is an adventure. And again there is something inherently almost mystical, magical about it. But it works. And the other facets of community will provide hints as to how it does.

REALISM

A second characteristic of community is that it is realistic. In the community of marriage, for example, when Lily and I discuss an issue such as how to deal with one of our children, we are likely to develop a response more realistic than if either of us were operating alone. If only for this reason, I believe that it is extremely difficult for a single parent to make adequate decisions about his or her children. Even if the best Lily and I can do is to come up with two different points of view, they modulate each other. In larger communities the process is still more effective. A community of sixty can usually come up with a dozen different points of view. The resulting consensual stew, composed of multiple ingredients, is usually far more creative than a two-ingredient dish could ever be.

We are accustomed to think of group behavior as often primitive. Indeed, I myself have written about the ease with which groups can become evil.[2] "Mob psychology" is properly a vernacular expression. But groups of whatever kind are seldom real communities. There is, in fact, more than a quantum leap between an ordinary group and a community; they are entirely different phenomena. And a real community is, by definition, immune to mob psychology because of its encouragement of individuality, its inclusion of a variety of points of view. Time and again I have seen a community begin to make a certain decision or establish a certain norm when one of the members will suddenly say, "Wait a minute, I don't think I can go along with this." Mob psychology cannot occur in an environment in which individuals are free to speak their minds and buck the trend. Community is such an environment.

Because a community includes members with many different points of view and the freedom to express them, it comes to appreciate the whole of a situation far better than an individual, couple, or ordinary group can. Incorporating the dark and the light, the sacred and the profane, the sorrow and the joy, the glory and the mud, its conclusions are well rounded. Nothing is likely to be left out. With so many frames of reference, it approaches reality more and more closely. Realistic decisions, consequently, are more often guaranteed in community than in any other human environment.

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[2] M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

An important aspect of the realism of community deserves mention: humility. While rugged individualism predisposes one to arrogance, the "soft" individualism of community leads to humility. Begin to appreciate each others' gifts, and you begin to appreciate your own limitations. Witness others share their brokenness, and you will become able to accept your own inadequacy and imperfection. Be fully aware of human variety, and you will recognize the interdependence of humanity.

As a group of people do these things—become a community—they become more and more humble, not only as individuals but also as a group—hence more realistic. From which kind of group would you expect a wise, realistic decision: an arrogant one, or a humble one?

CONTEMPLATION

Among the reasons that a community is humble and hence realistic is that it is contemplative. It examines itself. It is self-aware. It knows itself. "Know thyself" is a sure rule for humility. As that fourteenth-century classic on contemplation, *The Cloud of Unknowing,* put it: "Meekness in itself is nothing else than a true knowing and feeling of a man's self as he is. Any man who truly sees and feels himself as he is must surely be meek indeed."[3]

The word "contemplative" has a variety of connotations. Most of them center upon awareness. The essential goal of contemplation is increased awareness of the world outside oneself, the world inside oneself, and the relationship between the two. A man who settles for a relatively limited awareness of himself could hardly be called contemplative. It is also questionable whether he could be called psychologically mature or emotionally healthy. Self-examination is the key to insight, which is the key to wisdom. Plato put it most bluntly: "The unexamined life is not worth living."[4]

The community-building process requires self-examination from the beginning. And as the members become thoughtful about themselves they also learn to become increasingly thoughtful about the group. "How are *we* doing?" they begin to ask with greater and greater frequency. "Are *we* still on target? Are *we* a healthy group? Have *we* lost the spirit?"

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[3] Trans. Ira Progoff (New York: Julian Press, 1969), p. 92.

[4] J. W. Mackail, ed., *The Greek Anthology* (1906), Vol 111, *Apology, p. 38.*

The spirit of community once achieved is not then something forever obtained. It is not something that can be bottled or preserved in aspic. It is repeatedly lost. Remember how, toward the end of Mac Badgely's Tavistock group in 1967, after enjoying hours of nurturing fellowship, we began to squabble again. But remember also that we were quick to recognize it because we had become aware of ourselves as a group. And because we were rapidly able to identify the cause of the problem—our division into Grailers and Sears, Roebuckers—we were rapidly able to transcend that division and recapture the spirit of community.

No community can expect to be in perpetual good health. What a genuine community does do, however, because it is a contemplative body, is recognize its ill health when it occurs and quickly take appropriate action to heal itself. Indeed, the longer they exist, the more efficient healthy communities become in this recovery process. Conversely, groups that never learn to be contemplative either do not become community in the first place or else rapidly and permanently disintegrate.

A SAFE PLACE

It is no accident that I relearned "the lost art of crying" at the age of thirty-six while I was in a true community setting. Despite this relearning, my early training in rugged individualism was sufficiently effective that even today I can cry in public only when I am in a safe place. One of my joys, whenever I return to community, is that the "gift of tears" is returned to me. I am not alone. Once a group has achieved community, the single most common thing members express is: "I feel safe here."

It is a rare feeling. Almost all of us have spent nearly all of our lives feeling only partially safe, if at all. Seldom, if ever, have we felt completely free to be ourselves. Seldom, if ever, in any kind of a group, have we felt wholly accepted and acceptable. Consequently, virtually everyone enters a new group situation with his or her guard up. That guard goes very deep. Even if a conscious attempt is made to be open and vulnerable, there will still be ways in which unconscious defenses remain strong. Moreover, an initial admission of vulnerability is so likely to be met with fear, hostility, or simplistic attempts to heal or convert that all but the most courageous will retreat behind their walls.

There is no such thing as instant community under ordinary circumstances. It takes a great deal of work for a group of strangers to achieve the safety of true community. Once they succeed, however, it is as if the floodgates were opened. As soon as it is safe to speak one's heart, as soon as most people in the group know they will be listened to and accepted for themselves, years and years of pent-up frustration and hurt and guilt and grief come pouring out. And pouring out ever faster. Vulnerability in community snowballs. Once its members become vulnerable and find themselves being valued and appreciated, they become more and more vulnerable. The walls come tumbling down. And as they tumble, as the love and acceptance escalates, as the mutual intimacy multiplies, true healing and converting begins. Old wounds are healed, old resentments forgiven, old resistances overcome. Fear is replaced by hope.

So another of the characteristics of community is that it is healing and converting. Yet I have deliberately not listed that characteristic by itself, lest the subtlety of it be misunderstood. For the fact is that most of our human attempts to heal and convert prevent community. Human beings have within them a natural yearning and thrust toward health and wholeness and holiness. (All three words are derived from the same root.) Most of the time, however, this thrust, this energy, is enchained by fear, neutralized by defenses and resistances. But put a human being in a truly safe place, where these defenses and resistances are no longer necessary, and the thrust toward health is liberated. When we are safe, there is a natural tendency for us to heal and convert ourselves.

Experienced psychotherapists usually come to recognize this truth. As neophytes they see it as their task to heal the patient and often believe they succeed in doing so. With experience, however, they realize that they do not have the power to heal. But they also learn that it is within their power to listen to the patient, to accept him or her, to establish a "therapeutic relationship." So they focus not so much on healing as on making their relationship a safe place where the patient is likely to heal himself.

Paradoxically, then, a group of humans becomes healing and converting only after its members have learned to stop trying to heal and convert. Community is a safe place precisely because no one is attempting to heal or convert you, to fix you, to change you. Instead, the members accept you as you are. You are free to be you. And being so free, you are free to discard defenses, masks, disguises; free to seek your own psychological and spiritual health; free to become your whole and holy self.

A LABORATORY FOR PERSONAL DISARMAMENT

Toward the end of a two-day community experience in 1984 a late-middle-aged lady announced to the group: "I know Scotty said we weren't supposed to drop out, but when my husband and I got home yesterday evening we were seriously considering doing just that. I didn't sleep very well last night, and I almost didn't come here this morning. But something very strange has happened. Yesterday I was looking at all of you through hard eyes. Yet today for some reason—I don't really understand it—I have become soft-eyed, and it feels just wonderful."

This transformation—routine in community—is the same as that described in the story of the rabbi's gift. The decrepit monastery, a dying group, came alive (and into community) once its members began looking at each other and themselves through "soft eyes," seeing through lenses of respect. It may seem strange in our culture of rugged individualism that this transformation begins to occur precisely when we begin to "break down." As long as we look out at each other only through the masks of our composure, we are looking through hard eyes. But as the masks drop and we see the suffering and courage and brokenness and deeper dignity underneath, we truly start to respect each other as fellow human beings.

Once when I was speaking about community to the governing body of a church, one of the members commented: "What I hear you saying is that community requires the confession of brokenness." He was correct. But how remarkable it is that in our culture brokenness must be "confessed." We think of confession as an act that should be carried out in secret, in the darkness of the confessional, with the guarantee of professional priestly or psychiatric confidentiality. Yet the reality is that every human being is broken and vulnerable. How strange that we should feel compelled to hide our wounds when we are all wounded!

Vulnerability is a two-way street. Community requires the ability to expose our wounds and weaknesses to our fellow creatures. It also requires the capacity to be affected by the wounds of others, to be wounded by their wounds. This is what the woman meant by "soft eyes." Her eyes were no longer barriers, and she did, indeed, feel wonderful. There is pain in our wounds. But even more important is the love that arises among us when we share, both ways, our woundedness. Still, we cannot deny that this sharing requires a risk in our culture, the risk of violating the norm of pretended invulnerability. For most of us it is a new—and, seemingly, potentially dangerous—form of behavior.

It may seem odd to refer to community as a *laboratory*. The word implies a sterile place filled not with softness but with hardware. A laboratory can better be defined, however, as a place designed to be safe for experiments. We need such a place, because when we experiment we are trying out—testing—new ways of doing things. So it is in community: it is a safe place to experiment with new types of behavior. When offered the opportunity of such a safe place, most people will naturally begin to experiment more deeply than ever before with love and trust. They drop their customary defenses and threatened postures, the barriers of distrust, fear, resentment, and prejudice. They experiment with disarming themselves. They experiment with peace—peace within themselves and within the group. And they discover that the experiment works.

An experiment is designed to give us new *experience* from which we can extract new wisdom. So it is that in experimenting with personally disarming themselves, the members of a true community *experientially* discover the rules of peacemaking and learn its virtues. It is a personal experience so powerful that it can become the driving force behind the quest for peace on a global scale.

A GROUP THAT CAN FIGHT GRACEFULLY

It may at first glance seem paradoxical that a community that is a safe place and a laboratory for disarmament should also be a place of conflict. Perhaps a story will help. A Sufi master was strolling through the streets one day with his students. When they came to the city square, a vicious battle was being fought between government troops and rebel forces. Horrified by the bloodshed, the students implored, "Quick, Master, which side should we help?"

"Both," the Master replied.

The students were confused. "Both?" they demanded. "Why should we help both?"

"We need to help the authorities learn to listen to the aspirations of the people," the Master answered, "and we need to help the rebels learn how not to compulsively reject authority."

In genuine community there are no sides. It is not always easy, but by the time they reach community the members have learned how to give up cliques and factions. They have learned how to listen to each other and how not to reject each other. Sometimes consensus in community is reached with miraculous rapidity. But at other times it is arrived at only after lengthy struggle. Just because it is a safe place does not mean community is a place without conflict. It is, however, a place where conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed and with wisdom as well as grace. A community is a group that can fight gracefully.

That this is so is hardly accidental. For community is an amphitheater where the gladiators have laid down their weapons and their armor, where they have become skilled at listening and understanding, where they respect each others' gifts and accept each others' limitations, where they celebrate their differences and bind each others' wounds, where they are committed to a struggling together rather than against each other. It is a most unusual battleground indeed. But that is also why it is an unusually effective ground for conflict resolution.

The significance of this is hardly slight. There are very real conflicts in the world, and the worst of them do not seem to go away. But there is a fantasy abroad. Simply stated, it goes like this: "If we can resolve our conflicts, then someday we shall be able to live together in community." Could it be that we have it totally backward? And that the real dream should be: "If we can live together in community, then someday we shall be able to resolve our conflicts"?

A GROUP OF ALL LEADERS

When I am the designated leader I have found that once a group becomes a community, my nominal job is over. I can sit back and relax and be one among many, for another of the essential characteristics of community is a total decentralization of authority. Remember that it is anti-totalitarian. Its decisions are reached by consensus. Communities have sometimes been referred to as leaderless groups. It is more accurate, however, to say that a community is a group of all leaders.

Because it is a safe place, compulsive leaders feel free in community—often for the first time in their lives—to *not* lead. And the customarily shy and reserved feel free to step forth with their latent gifts of leadership. The result is that a community is an ideal decision-making body. The expression "A camel is a horse created by a committee" does not mean that group decisions are inevitably clumsy and imperfect; it does mean that committees are virtually never communities.

So it was in 1983 when I needed to make some difficult major decisions in my life—so difficult that I knew I was not intelligent enough to make them alone even with expert advice. I asked for help, and twenty-eight women and men came to my aid from around the country. Quite properly, we spent the first 80 percent of our three days together building ourselves into a community. Only in the last few hours did we turn our attention to the decisions that needed to be made. And they were made with the speed and brilliance of lightning.

One of the most beautiful characteristics of community is what I have come to call the "flow of leadership." It is because of this flow that our community in 1983 was able to make its decisions so rapidly and effectively. And because its members felt free to express themselves, it was as if their individual gifts were offered at just the right moment in the decision-making process. So one member stepped forward with part A of the solution. And since the community recognized the wisdom of the gift, everyone deferred to it so that instantly, almost magically, a second member was free to step forward with part B of the solution. And so it flowed around the room.

The flow of leadership in community is routine. It is a phenomenon that has profound implications for anyone who would seek to improve organizational decision-making—in business, government, or elsewhere. But it is not a quick trick or fix. Community must be built first. Traditional hierarchical patterns have to be at least temporarily set aside. Some kind of control must be relinquished. For it is a situation in which it is the spirit of community itself that leads and not any single individual.

A SPIRIT

Community is a spirit—but not in the way that the familiar phrase "community spirit" is usually understood. To most of us it implies a competitive spirit, a jingoistic boosterism, such as that displayed by fans of winning football teams or the citizens of a town in which they take great pride. "Our town is better than your town" might be taken as a typical expression of community spirit.

But this understanding of the spirit of community is profoundly misleading as well as dreadfully shallow. In only one respect is it accurate. The members of a group who have achieved genuine community do take pleasure, even delight—in themselves as a collective. They know they have won something together, collectively discovered something of great value, that they are "onto something." Beyond that the similarity ends. There is nothing competitive, for instance, about the spirit of true community. To the contrary, a group possessed by a spirit of competitiveness is by definition not a community. Competitiveness is always exclusive; genuine community is inclusive. If community has enemies, it has begun to lose the spirit of community—if it ever had it in the first place.

The spirit of true community is the spirit of peace. People in the early stages of a community-building workshop will frequently ask, "How will we know when we are a community?" It is a needless question. When a group enters community there is a dramatic change in spirit. And the new spirit is almost palpable. There is no mistaking it. No one who has experienced it need ever ask again, "How will we know when we are a community?"

Nor will one ever question that it is a spirit of peace that prevails when a group enters community. An utterly new quietness descends on the group. People seem to speak more quietly; yet, strangely, their voices seem to carry better through the room. There are periods of silence, but it is never an uneasy silence. Indeed, the silence is welcomed. It feels tranquil. Nothing is frantic anymore. The chaos is over. It is as if noise had been replaced by music. The people listen and can hear. It is peaceful.

But spirit is slippery. It does not submit itself to definition, to capture, the way material things do. So it is that a group in community does not always feel peaceful in the usual sense of the word. Its members will from time to time struggle with each other, and struggle hard. The struggle may become excited and exuberant with little, if any, room for silence. But it is a productive, not a destructive, struggle. It always moves toward consensus, because it is always a loving struggle. It takes place on a ground of love. The spirit of community is inevitably the spirit of peace and love.

The "atmosphere" of love and peace is so palpable that almost every community member experiences it as a spirit. Hence, even the agnostic and atheist members will generally report a community-building workshop as a spiritual experience. How this experience is interpreted, however, is highly variable. Those with a secular consciousness tend to assume that the spirit of community is no more than a creation of the group itself; and beautiful though it may be, they will leave it at that. Most Christians, on the other hand, tend toward a more complicated understanding.

In the latter frame of reference the spirit of community is not envisioned as a purely human spirit or one created solely by the group. It is assumed to be external to and independent of the group. It therefore is thought of as descending upon the group, just as the Holy Spirit is said to have descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove. This does not mean, however, that the spirit's visitation is accidental or unpredictable. It can fall upon and take root only in fertile, prepared ground. Thus for those of Christian orientation the work of community building is seen as preparation for the descent of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of community is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that community is solely a Christian phenomenon. I have seen community develop among Christians and Jews, Christians and atheists, Jews and Muslims, Muslims and Hindus. People of any religious persuasion or none whatever can develop community. Nor does it mean that a belief in Christianity is a guarantee of community. It is reported that some men saw Jesus' disciples casting out demons in his name, and they thought that this was an easy formula. So with no more thought, they went up to some demoniacs and shouted, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." But absolutely nothing happened, except that the demons laughed at them.

So it is with groups. A group of Christians who are not prepared can sit around shouting "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus" until they are blue in the face, and nothing will happen. They will move no closer to community. On the other hand, any group of people (no matter what their religious persuasion or whether the word "Jesus" is ever spoken) who are willing to practice the love, discipline, and sacrifice that are required for the spirit of community, [the spirit] that Jesus extolled and exemplified, will be gathered together in his name and he will be there.

My own frame of reference is Christian, and for me, therefore, the spirit of community, which is the spirit of peace and love, is also the spirit of Jesus. But the Christian understanding of community would go even beyond this. The doctrine of the Trinity—of three in one—holds that Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit, while separate in one sense are the same in another. So when I talk of Jesus being present in community, I am also speaking of the presence of God and the Holy Spirit.

In Christian thought the Holy Spirit is particularly identified with wisdom. Wisdom is envisioned as a kind of revelation. To the secular mind we humans, through thought, study and the assimilation of experience, arrive at wisdom. It is our own achievement. We somehow earn it. While Christian thinkers hardly denigrate the value of thought, study, and experience, they believe that something more is involved in the creation of wisdom. Specifically, they believe wisdom to be a gift of God and the Holy Spirit.

The wisdom of a true community often seems miraculous. This wisdom can perhaps be explained in purely secular terms as a result of the freedom of expression, the pluralistic talents, the consensual decision-making that occur in in community. There are times however, when this wisdom to be more a matter of divine spirit and possible divine intervention. This is one of the reasons why the feeling of joy is such a frequent concomitant of the spirit of community. The members feel that they have been temporarily—at least partially—transported out of the mundane world of ordinary preoccupations. For the moment it is as if heaven and earth had somehow met.

How Do I Hear God Calling?

how do I hear God calling
when my mind is so filled
with its own thoughts?
the answer lies in the

space

between two breaths where
God waits to dance with me...
to sweep me away to such joy
as I have known no other way!

by Chris Mercogliano

A SECOND REPRINT ***from the*TTF Newsletter *on the core issue of ADD .... which I call "The Emperor's New Clothes Syndrome"... begged me to include it!***

WHY I BELIEVE ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER IS A MYTH

by Thomas Armstrong, PhD

Only one book has taken the stand that ADD or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) does not actually exist. Thomas Armstrong, a California psychologist and learning specialist, argues that ADD is society s way of putting a simplistic label onto matters that are much more complex and far-reaching. He suggests that. rather than being a medical disorder, as its proponents claim, ADD has come about during the past two decades because of many different forces, including: a short attention-span culture brought about by mass media, the breakdown of authority and the family system, and the epidemic of stress-related problems in children.

When parents hear me say that attention deficit disorder is a myth, they sometimes become very upset. They think I'm saying that their kids aren't jumpy, distractible, forgetful, impulsive, or disorganized. That's not what I'm saying at all! It's quite obvious to me that our nation's children have probably never been so hyperactive.

The question is, what accounts for this? Is it a medical disorder called ADD (or ADHD as it's sometimes called)?

I think not. I think instead that what we've learned to call ADD is instead a number of things all jumbled up together under this simplistic label. Kids can be hyperactive for any number of reasons: because they're anxious or depressed, because they're allergic to milk, because they're bored with school, because they have a different kind of mind and aren't being challenged, because they're overstimulated from television and video games.

I could go on. The point is that the ADD label makes it too easy to ignore what might be going on beneath the surface of things. "Oh, he has ADD? Whew! Glad we know what the problem is now!" But perhaps we don't really know at all. Although there is a great deal of support from the medical and scientific community for ADD, once one looks into the literature, things become less clear.

Nobody can actually tell you, for example, how many kids have ADD. Though the literature traditionally says 3-5% of all children have ADD, I've seen statistics in textbooks that have ranged from .019% (in England where it's far less common) to 10% and above. ADD is in the eyes of the beholder. Many of the "tests" that are used to diagnose ADD are flawed.

The behavior rating scales that ask parents to rate their kids on a scale from 1 to 5, for instance, in terms of hyperactivity, impulsivity and so forth, are very subjective and parents and teachers often don't agree on what they see in the same child. The continuous performance tests that are often used to diagnose for ADD are a joke. One of them is a box that sits on a table.

The child is told that random numbers will appear in a screen on the box. They are instructed to press the button below the screen whenever a 9 is followed by a 1. What a stupid task! Yet on the basis of this, children are being diagnosed and having their medication levels adjusted. As the textbooks themselves declare, "there is no blood test (or other objective test) to tell when a child has ADD." If this is so, then how do we really know for sure if he or she has it?

I've seen studies showing that the symptoms of ADD disappear or lessen under several real life situations: when the child is doing things that interest him, when he's engaged in one-to-one interaction with someone he trusts, when he's being paid to do something, and when he can control the outcome of his activities. If ADD can disappear under these conditions, then how can ADD really exist as a medical disorder?

Many parents tell me that they don't medicate their ADD-labeled children on weekends or holidays. Why? Because they're not in school and they have more opportunities to behave in active ways. If this is true, then it's clear to me that at least in those instances we're using Ritalin and other drugs to control children in specific environments (i.e., restrictive classrooms).

I realize that Ritalin is very effective and for some kids it can make a big difference in their lives. But it shouldn't be the first thing that paremts and physicians turn to at the sign of problems. On Ritalin, research suggests that kids begin to attribute their actions to the pill, not to their own internal effort.

Studies suggest that many children *hate* taking Ritalin, yet you don't see this reported anywhere in the ADD literature. For kids who have that wide-focus attention span (e.g. paying ayyention to lots of different things rather than one single stimulus], Ritalin can close them down to a fine point of attention, which is great for doing a math page, but can hamper more divergent forms of thinking associated with creativity.

Probably the thing that bothers me the most about this ADD phenomenon, is its emphasis on negatives. We're talking here about disease and disorder; we're talking about a psychiatric illness. Do we really want to be handing these labels out so freely? In the 1950s, only a very few children were labeled as having these problems by the American Psychiatric Association, and they were grouped under the category: "Organic Brain Syndromes." This was a serious category, that included kids who'd had accidents and illnesses (like encephalitis) that had dramatically impaired areas of the brain important for attention and behavior.

However, over the past four decades, more and more children have been drawn into the behavior and attention disorder web, kids who back then might well have been regarded as "fireballs," or"daydreamers," or "bundles of energy," but would have been seen basically as normal (or even better than normal!).

I'm very concerned that the literature on ADD has so much to say about what these kids *can't* do, and virtually nothing about what they can do. In my own informal research, I've seen countless examples of kids labeled ADD who are musicians, dancers, athletes, leaders, and creative in many other ways. Why don't we see these kids as basically healthy and creative individuals who may not function as well in certain kinds of environments (for example, the worksheet wasteland of many classrooms), but do great when given a chance to learn in their own way. Many kids labeled ADD in fact do great when they're fixing an automobile, or doing experiments in their nature lab, or performing in a theater piece. Many kids with behavior difficulties grow up to become great individuals, people like Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Sara Bernhardt, Louie Armstrong, and Albert Einstein. Why don't we start using models of growth to describe our highly energetic kids and throw this ADD disease label in the trash basket where it belongs?

For more information see:

Thomas Armstrong's *The Myth of the A.D.D. Child:*
50 Ways to Improve Your Child 's Behavior and Attention Span
Without Drugs, Labels or Coercion
Available at your bookstore or by calling 1-800-247-6553.

Here follow selections from the second issue of the literary magazine edited and published by our oldest Free School class. I only wish you could see the rainbow splendor of its covers—and that I could publish the whole thing!

Mosaic

From the Editors:

We started this magazine last year to support our class trip to Olympia, Washington. We had a great time in Washington. This year we are going on a road trip to Washington, D.C., Tallahassee, Jacksonville, New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Gettysburg, and other historical sites. We will be gone for two weeks and are hoping to raise 3,000 dollars for food, gas, historical site entrance fees and extra money in case of an emergency.

This year we decided to continue with the magazine for one of our fundraisers. Former Governor Mario Cuomo was kind enough to let us take up some of his time to interview him. Mr. Cuomo was fun and very nice. We had a great time talking to him. We decided to do the interview with him because we wanted to get his views on some subjects that interested us.

Other features include: an interview with Nicholas Katzenbach who was the Assistant Attorney General under J.F.K.; and the essay, "Witches Now and Then," by Jessica Graves.

We also are joined by four new students who have contributed greatly. You'll see some of their work in the poems "So What If I Am A Black Woman?" by Kristle Walker and "Queen of Basketball" by Warren Lane and in the essay, "From There to Here," by Jonathan Vaccaro.

Once again, this magazine has been fun and difficult, so we hope you enjoy reading it!

Sincerely,

Zachery Korzyk and Jessica Graves, Co-Editors

Interview with

Mario Cuomo

By Zachery Korzyk, Jessica Graves and Adam Platt

Mosaic: What was it like being Governor of New York for twelve years?

Mario Cuomo: Difficult, exciting, occasionally inspirational, frustrating; and I wish I was still doing it.

M: What was the most exciting part?

MC: There were many moments of excitement, some of them grim like the explosion at the World Trade Center, like the seizing of sixteen guards who were hostages at the Sing Sing prison, now known as Ossinning. There were other times when we were able to balance the budget and to find more money for education and to start the Decade of the Child, which was the most ambitious program for children in the state's history. There was a time when we used a police helicopter to deliver a woman having her baby from a rural area to a special hospital where she could have it safely. We were able to get her there in time and all went well. There were many, many exciting moments. The greatest thing of all about being Governor was having the chance to help people.

M: Looking back, what do think you would have done differently?

MC: Won the election in 1994... Seriously, one other thing I might have done differently is that I would have not changed the things I did, but I would have changed the way I talked about them. I think I would have talked more about education as a number one priority for the state. And I would have said it over and over and over again, every day probably. Because the people of the state have so much happening in their lives, unless you concentrate on an idea and repeat it again and again, it's difficult for them to hold it in their minds. I would have done all the things I did with education—being more generous with education at the college level than any other state, working on Head Start and pre-K programs and disabled children programs—but I also would have talked about them a lot more.

M: Do you think Governor Pataki is doing a good job?

MC: I'll leave that to the voters in 1998. I think he is doing what he said he would do, like the death penalty. I think I'm very flattered that he has chosen to enact two of my initiatives, the Environmental Bond Act—which I asked for and he opposed—and the second is the take-over of the Shoreham nuclear power plant on Long Island—which I proposed in 1994 and he said was a bad idea.

M: What do you think about Governor Pataki running for president?

MC: I think every, every person who believes that they would make the best possible president should run for president. If Governor Pataki thinks he is the best possible person, then I think he should run.

M: Do you think New York still has a lot of problems to solve?

MC: Oh, we have many, many problems. We have a budget that is constantly spending more than its taking in. In the past few years we've been very lucky because the economy has been so good, and frankly that has nothing to do with the state because our economy is a national economy and when the economy is good, most of the states do well. That's what is happening now, with so much money coming out of Wall Street that we could be paying down a lot of the debt we created in earlier years. But that's still a real problem because we have such a large debt outstanding. For many years we borrowed money to build schools, roads, bridges and to do other things; and now we need to pay that debt down.

M: Why did you decide not to be on the Supreme Court?

MC: Because I thought the problems of the country were more political, fiscal and social than they were constitutional. I would prefer to have time to talk about these other problems, which I wouldn't be able to do if I were on the Supreme Court, since the justices are only allowed to discuss the constitutional issues brought before them.

M: Why didn't you run for president?

MC: At the time I wanted to and said I wanted to run in 1991, the Republicans in the State Senate refused to pass a budget in order to keep me from running. You see, they knew that I couldn't run for president if our state didn't have a budget because everywhere I went and started to talk about the economy people would make fun of me because I hadn't been able to get a budget passed at home. And that was it.

M: Do you think President Clinton is doing a good job?

MC: I think President Clinton has convinced the people of the United States that he's doing a good job, and that's why he was re-elected by a sizable margin. I believe that there are many problems that the country is not addressing. One of them is middle-class workers, that is people who work for a living because they have to, as distinguished from stock market investors and people who own businesses. The middle-class workers are not making the kind of money that they should. They're working harder than they ever have, but they're sliding downward because the cost of things like education and health care are growing faster than their wages.

And then the poor under them—that's forty million people in the United States of America—are going nowhere. We're just kind of ignoring them except for speeches we make about how the poor just have to work harder, when some of them are begging for jobs that don't exist.

M: If you were president, what would you do differently?

MC: I would concentrate more on education. I would say that in respect to Social Security and Medicare that if you're very rich and you don't need them then let that money go toward other needs like health care for the poor, reducing taxes and building new roads and bridges. I would give the defense budget only what the defense budget needs. Last year we gave defense twenty million more than the Pentagon asked for. I would put that money into the things we need.

M: Do you think there will be a World War III?

MC: No. No, I don't think that we're quite that stupid. A World War III would be the end of civilization as we know it because there are so many nuclear devices around, we would blow up most of the place before we were finished. And I can't believe we're that stupid, though sometimes I wonder.

M: What do think America could do to prevent one?

MC: I think the key is for us to civilize ourselves more because—while it may be difficult for you to believe this—the United States is the most violent nation in the world, with more handguns per capita than anywhere else, more murder, more people in prison, more drug addiction; and that's sinful because we're also the most powerful and the richest and the luckiest place in the world. And so we have no excuse for allowing all of this terrible conduct. I think the one general thing we need to do to deal with all of this and to avoid absurdities like war is to educate ourselves, to make ourselves more and more aware of things, because the more you are aware, the more you can tell what is stupid and what is not stupid.

So the answer to drugs is not just to lock up all the drug dealers, which of course you still must try to do, but to educate young people about what drugs do to you. The smarter we make ourselves through education, both formal—the kind you get in school—and informal—what you learn about the world just by observing it, just by growing up, by traveling and reading, the better off we will be. This is because the more you educate yourself, the more you come to believe in things like God and the necessity for us to work together as brothers and sisters.

M: What do you miss the most about being governor?

MC: The chance to help people every day.

M: What don't you miss?

MC: The formalities, the necessity to raise money for political campaigns, the stupidity of late budgets.

M: Do you like being a lawyer?

MC: I have always been a lawyer, even before I was a public servant, and I love our lady of the law. But, frankly, I prefer public service.

M: What do you do in your spare time?

MC: I see to it that I don't have any. (Laughter) Really, I work a lot, and when I do have a little time off, mostly I like to do things with my family, with my wife, of course. Let me see, is it forty-three years we've been married now? That's right ... no wait a minute ... it'll be forty-three years on June 5. Phew; I'm glad I cleared that up. And I have five beautiful children and six granddaughters with another about to be born.

M: Did you like doing the Doritos commercial?

MC: (Laughing) I had a lot of fun with Ann Richards (former governor of Texas). She's a wonderful woman, extremely humorous and bright. That part of it was a lot of fun. It was also very difficult. It took seventeen hours to film, believe it or not.

M: What's it like in show business? Is it loud and stressful?

MC: Well, you've said it. It's loud and very stressful because there's tremendous pressure. People are always running around and banging and setting up sets and then taking them down and shouting instructions. It's a frenetic kind of existence, very exciting and thrilling.

M: What was your reaction when you heard that your son was appointed the head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development?

MC: Great, great joy, satisfaction and humility. Because I know, and I know my son, Andrew, knows that as good as he is, you have to be lucky and you have to be in the right place at the right time. And he was. I'm very, very happy for him.

M: Do you like New York City-living better than Albany-living?

MC: No; I liked Albany. I liked it a lot. The first job I ever had was in Albany, as a law clerk in the Court of Appeals for a man by the name of Judge Adrian Burke. I was right out of law school and I lived in the old Wellington Hotel, which I guess is still there, although it isn't being used any more. So, I have a long history in Albany. It's been very good to me and my family.

M: Can you tell us about your minor league baseball career?

MC: Well, it was short because I got beaned. In Brunswick, Georgia I got hit in the back of the head with a pitch. In those days nobody wore helmets, but if I had I might still be in baseball. I was given a lot of money then—$2,000. To give you an idea of how much money that was, Mickey Mantle only got $1,100 and Yogi Berra, $500. I was considered a very good pro prospect and I enjoyed the one season I played down in Georgia. But it all ended with a fastball that gave me a blood clot on the brain.

M: What are your plans for the future?

MC: I'm not making a lot of long-range plans; but I'm writing another book and I think I'll be doing a little more television. I was doing a CNN debate with Bill Bennett, so I think you'll be seeing me on television again soon. And I'm practicing law again and traveling around the country lecturing a great deal.

M: Have you ever been on Larry King Live?

MC: Oh, I've been on Larry King's show fourteen times.

M: Whoa, I never knew that.

MC: Yeah, I think I've probably been on Larry King more times than anyone except for maybe O.J. Simpson's lawyers. (Laughter)

M: Was he really fun to be around off camera?

MC: He's a terrific guy and I just finished filming something with Larry because he's getting ready to celebrate his fortieth anniversary in show business. He's a wonderful, fun guy, a very human and humble person. The part you don't see on television is how sweet he is, how kind he is and how grateful he is for his own good luck.

M: Do you think you will run for any political offices again?

MC: Do you think I'll run for any political offices again?

M: I think you'd be pretty good at whatever you did.

MC: Thank you. I'll settle for that. It might encourage me to run again.

M: Thank you a lot for taking the time to do this interview.

MC: I'm flattered that you asked me and I wish you all good luck.

Interview With Nicholas Katzenbach
by Lily Mercogliano

I interviewed my Great Uncle Nicholas Katzenbach, who was the Deputy Attorney General under John F. Kennedy. He played a big part in the civil rights movement by helping James Meredith become the first black man to be admitted to a white school in the South and many other projects. I found interviewing my Great Uncle Nick a fun and interesting experience. He gave some good and very straight answers.

—Lily Mercogliano

Lily Mercogliano: When and where were you born?
Nicholas Katzenbach: On January 17, 1922. In Philadelphia.
LM: Where did you grow up?
NK: In Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey.
LM: Where did you go to school?
NK: I went to a private elementary school called the Princeton Country Day School. I attended the Phillips Exeter Academy for high school.
LM: And where did you go to college?
NK: At Princeton University.
LM: How old were you when you fought in World War II?
NK: I was just twenty.
LM: What did you do in the war?
NK: I was a navigator on a B25 Mitchell bomber; it was a medium bomber.
LM: I understand you were shot down in the war and put in a P.O.W. camp, what was that like?
NK: Well, it varied. Part of the time it wasn't too bad. At other times they were very short on food and so it wasn't so good.
LM: What did you do after the war?
NK: After the war I went back home and finished college. I had done a lot of studying in prison camp, because I had many books that the YMCA provided. Since I was able to study there, I was actually able to do an equivalency and finish my college degree. When I came back, I took the exams during the last part of the summer of 1945. After that I was discharged from the army and I went into law school.
LM: When were you married?
NK: 1946.
LM: When did you start working for the Kennedy Administration?

NK: Right at the beginning of it, in January of 1961.

LM: Did you know both Robert Kennedy and President John F. Kennedy?

NK: I didn't know either before I went to work there.

LM: When you were working there, did you know either of them well?

NK: When I was working there I got to know them well, yes.

LM: What were they like?

NK: Well, I think Bobby and the President were very different kinds of people. The President was a much more restrained type of person, perhaps, than Bobby was. They were both intelligent. They were both quite young; Bobby was really very young. He hadn't had much experience as a lawyer, in fact really none at all to speak of. I liked them. They were people that I liked, and they were people that I respected.

LM: What did you do as Deputy Attorney General?

NK: Well, I essentially did the same things that the Attorney General did, except that I was under his guidance, I guess you'd call it. I would do all the same things that he would otherwise have been doing if he weren't busy on something else. We just sort of shared the job. He was particularly interested in doing something about organized crime. And of course, the issue of civil rights took up a good deal of his time. We both worked on that a great deal.

LM: What part did you take in the civil rights movement?

NK: The part I played, which most people remember me for, is when I was down in Alabama and George Wallace was standing in the door trying to prevent Vivian Malone from going to school there. But I think the part that I was most active in was in getting a civil rights act, which became the Civil Rights Act of 1964, enacted by Congress. That took a great deal of my time for almost two years.

LM: Did you ever meet Martin Luther King Jr.?

NK: Yes.

LM: Under what circumstances?

NK: I met him when he came up to Washington. He was complaining about something that we weren't doing concerning some very unfortunate activities in the town of Albany, Georgia. He wanted us to do more and handle things differently.

LM: What was he like?

NK: That's a good question; it's hard to answer. He was a very charismatic person, very much of a leader. He sounded very much like a preacher, even when he talked.

LM: Do you remember where you were when the President was assassinated?

NK: Yes.

LM: Where were you?

NK: I was just about to order a meal in a restaurant, not very far from the Justice Department, when I heard on the radio that he had been shot. I went back to the Department of Justice right away.

LM: What was your reaction when you heard?

NK: Oh, it was sort of a great despair, I think more than anything. How could this have possibly happened? And, of course, wondering for a little while whether he was going to live or not.

LM: How did President Kennedy's assassination affect your life?

NK: Well, I don't know that it really affected it that much. I continued to work for Lyndon Johnson, and I continued to work with Bobby Kennedy after he went into the Senate. I think my life was more affected by his life than it was by his death.

LM: Were there many things that you knew which President Kennedy wanted to do, but was killed before he had the chance?

NK: No. With the possible exception of the Vietnam War, I actually really believe that the things which Lyndon Johnson did, such as his war on poverty and his major efforts on civil rights, were all things that President Kennedy would have wanted to do also.

LM: Do you think John F. Kennedy was a great president?

NK: I don't think he had time to be a great president. He wasn't there long enough. He was only there for three years.

LM: How do you think the civil rights movement was affected by the President's death?

NK: Well, I think between what the government under President Kennedy and then President Johnson was able to do, coupled with the efforts that were made by Dr. King, I think the country was really set on a new course. I think that I'm less optimistic today, but hopefully we are still on it.

LM: How did you react when you heard that Robert Kennedy had been shot?

NK: It just seemed too much. It seemed as though there was just too much violence in the world and this was just...it was just very, very depressing.

LM: Do you think that our history would have been different if JFK and RFK hadn't been killed?

NK: Yes, I think it would have been, although I don't think anyone can really know. If JFK hadn't been killed, I think it is possible that we would not have gotten as deeply involved in Vietnam as we did. That would have been very good. I think Bobby had a real chance of being elected president. If he had been elected, that probably would have changed our history even more then JFK surviving because he would have been more active in civil rights. I also believe he would have gotten us out of Vietnam fairly quickly, and so I think that would have changed our history fairly substantially.

LM: What did you do after Richard Nixon was elected president?

NK: I went and worked for IBM corporation as their general counselor.

LM: What are you doing now? Do you work?

NK: I am semi-retired. I am still doing some legal work.

LM: How well do you think our society is dealing with prejudices today?

NK: Right at the moment, I think not terribly well, but I don't know who's fault that is.

LM: Do you think we could be doing better?

NK: I'm sure we can do better. But it takes time, effort and work.

LM: What do you think of President Clinton?

NK: I think President Clinton has the capacity to be a really fine president. Still, I'm not sure that he has demonstrated all the leadership that he needs to demonstrate in order to make good on that.

LM: What would you say was your biggest achievement in your life?

NK: Gosh, I don't know. I think probably the work I did getting the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed in Congress.

The Bees

Bees, they are small
They hurt.
They are flying around, into your
pants and up your shirt.
All around you,
And it hurts.
The day was hot and sunny,
with no wind.
The bees kept hurting him
Then they went away.

Adam Platt

The Place

A quiet place.
A place to gaze, to ponder
The past and dream of the future.
A place to think and be myself.
A place to sing and
Listen to the people around me.
Maybe someday I will say something.
But for now I will just gaze,
Think, ponder, and dream,
Sing and be myself.
For now I will listen,
Maybe later I will speak.
Anonymous

I Remember When

I remember when
A long time ago
The sky was black and the ground
had snow
They were here and they were there
They were everywhere
They crawled up my leg
Up my neck and finally over my
head
Yes, they took me into their world
A world of being smaller and weaker
than the other species
Getting stepped on
One by one
I was the next and it was no fun
I was there with the others.
Zachery Korzyk

Rage

Rage
All I feel is rage
Building up inside me
I had to leave
Leave my home
My friends
My family
Anger and sadness settles over me
I come home
I'm supposed to call it home
I can't
Never
Screw my father's sympathy
I don't want to be here
I take my aggression out
On everything
And in some ways I still do
Rage
All I feel is rage
Jessica Graves

So What If I Am A Black Woman?

So if I am a black woman, is it
a disease?
Well I sure hope it's catchy
Because you need to pour it into
a bottle
Level it and sprinkle it all over
people
Men and women
Work or cry
Love or die
For any one of us.

So what if I am a black woman,
is it a crime?
Well, arrest me
I am strong but I am weak

I am smart but still learning
I am loving but hateful
And I like to work 'cause I
like to feed and clothe your
mind
Like I've been doing for the
past 800 years.

So what if I am a black
woman, commit me!

'Cause I want happiness, not lies
Sunshine, not rain
Pleasure, not pain
A man, not a child.

So what if I am a black woman,
is it a sin?
Pray for me, 'cause I pray for you too

'Cause we are chestnut-
brown, honey-browned
Big hips, big lips and big chest,
and beautiful at the same time
Is it wrong 'cause I love me and I
want you to love me too
I've been like I've always been
Near you, beside you, close to
you, loving, strong giving
For over 300 years your black
woman.

Kristle Walker

From There to Here
by Jonathan Vaccaro

My name is Jonathan Vaccaro, and I am writing this article from personal experience. Currently I am a seventh grade student at The Free School. I have attended many different schools, public and private. Some of these schools include the Albany Academy for Boys, Doane Stuart, and Public School 27. I transferred from the Thomas O'Brien Academy for Science and Technology magnet school to the Free School. These are just a few of the schools which I have attended in the past few years. Even before I came to the Free School, I had experienced other forms of education. The Free School is a very different place from all the other schools I have been to. I will now explain to you some of the things at the Free School which are different from the other public and private schools, and what it was like making the transition to an alternative school.

One thing that is very different about the Free School compared to other schools is the kind of relationship that the students have with their teachers. In a public school the teachers are usually authority figures, but in the Free School the teachers are more like your friend. For instance, the teachers at the Free School are always called by their first name, unlike the public or private schools where the teachers are called by their last name.

Because the students have a closer relationship with their teachers, the adults show more trust and respect for them. This is seen by the fact that we are allowed and expected to have a lot of say in our education. Students are in charge of what they learn, and when to do the work. In public and private schools administrators make schedules for everyone, and the teachers decide what work you do. For example, a private or public school wouldn't let you slack off at all except for when recess comes.

The difference in teacher/student relationships is also seen in the way these schools go about solving students' problems. In public and private schools, students must leave their problems and disputes up to the teachers to solve. Yet, the Free School allows you to settle things on your own. The most important aspect of this form of problem solving is called a Council Meeting. A Council Meeting is where anyone who has a problem gathers everyone together in a circle. In this meeting all the teachers and students talk out the problem and help to solve it in a peaceful way. Council Meetings are also the place where most of the school rules are made. This is another way in which the Free School is different from public and private schools. In most other schools the teachers and administrators make the rules for the school. In the Free School not only do the teachers make some of the rules, but the students make them, too. In this way kids learn how to understand problems and are given the power to solve them.

When I first came to the Free School at the beginning of the year, I knew very little about it. Even though it is different, I found the transition from public school very easy. When I first came to the Free School, I felt more at home than at the other schools that I have been to. The public and private schools had given me a very locked-up feeling. As soon as I came to the Free School, I fit in right on my own level. In conclusion I would like to say that in my opinion the free environment of alternative schools makes them much better than all the public and private schools put together.

Witches of Now and Then

By Jessica E. Graves

When the word "witch" is said, usually the first thing that comes to mind is an old green woman in a black dress, a pointy hat, and a huge hairy wart on her nose. But the truth is that centuries ago a witch was a woman who knew too much. Many women with medical knowledge, especially midwives, and social undesirables were accused of being witches and persecuted as scapegoats.

During the 1600's and the 1700's, an almost hysterical fear of witchcraft swept over Europe. Thousands of people were tried and executed as witches. The courts allowed gossip and rumor to be used as evidence. Many children testified against their own parents. The American colonists brought the belief of witchcraft over from Europe. Suspected witches suffered persecution in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Virginia. The most famous witch hunt in American history occurred in Salem, Mass. Usually it was the poor, socially unacceptable or misfit people who were tried and convicted as witches. Sometimes if someone in a high social position had a problem with a poor, more unacceptable person, they would try to convince the community that the poorer person was a witch. When this was even suggested in that time, it caused hysteria. Just the thought that this person might be a witch was despicable and before you could snap your fingers, that woman or man was on trial. Even before this time, people were accused of being witches. Often this was because people were frightened and intimidated by others who knew more about medicines than themselves. Because they did not understand how a cure worked, they often assumed magic was involved. It was also convenient to blame witches for unexplained misfortune such as illness, a sudden death, or crop failure. Yet even so, fewer women were persecuted as witches before the 1600's. People were not so eager to make such accusations as often.

People got very upset about the possibility of a witch in their community because of the many superstitions which are traditionally associated with such people. For instance, witches were believed to have association with the devil. It was believed that a person, generally a woman, would sell his or her soul to the devil in exchange for magic powers. Many people accused witches of marrying demons and bearing monster children. The people also believed that on October 31 the witches and warlocks gathered to worship their master, the Devil. People who believe in witchcraft thought that a witch could do harm in many ways. By giving someone a magic potion, for example, a witch can make that person fall in love against his or her will. In another form of witchcraft, the witch makes a small wax or wooden doll in the image of the victim. The witch may do something to the doll, such as poking it with a needle or hitting it, and the person the doll is in the image of will experience the severe pain, or sometimes death.

From the years 1484 to 1782, nearly three centuries, the Christian church put to death over 300,000 women for practicing witchcraft. Many of these women were put to death by means of torture. Witches would be burned, drowned, and faced many other terrible fates. The people had tests to find out whether or not someone was a witch. One of these tests was that the accused witch would have her hands and feet tied together and put into a nearby creek. If the woman floated, she was a witch and would be killed, if not, she sank and drowned to death.

In many ways witch-hunts are still going on today. Of course, no one is literally burning women, but the things which are happening are just as bad. Just as they did hundreds of years ago, midwives are being persecuted for their knowledge and empowerment in the lives of pregnant women.

Before the 1700's, there were no hospitals, doctors or even traditional medicine. For cures, people would visit a midwife. Such women knew how to blend herbs and other plants to stop pain and illness. Soon some men decided that they wanted to practice midwifery. They would do the same things as female midwives and they all got along fine. A pregnant woman, or sick person, could pick who they wanted to go to from among the many male and female midwives.

After a while, other men started building hospitals used only for surgical operations. In these hospitals, only male doctors were performing the operations. Until 1900 all childbirths were performed by midwives. Then, the men in the hospitals began to notice that the midwives were the only ones performing childbirths and were getting all the money. The doctors decided that anyone who wanted to practice midwifery had to have a license. The schools that the midwives had to go to were run by men and the training was the same training a nurse would get. So almost nothing she learned would be valuable if she became a real midwife who went to homes to help women give birth. So it was the doctors in the hospitals who got licenses. Then these doctors spread the idea that having a baby at home was much more dangerous than having a baby in the hospital. Because of this, many more women went to the hospitals. Another thing that convinced more women to go to the hospital was the fact that the hospital could perform a cesarean section. The male doctors made a lot of money, and the traditional midwives started to lose money. Okay by the doctors. This same thing was happening in England, France, Germany and many other countries.

During the 1950's, the only thing a midwife needed to practice was a certificate from the Heath Department. There was very little interference in their work. Midwives would only be prosecuted severely if they really screwed up. Otherwise they were only told that they should probably go someplace else. Still, there were very few practicing midwives because pregnant women mostly went to hospitals for pain-killing drugs. So, many midwives decided that, hey, if everyone is going to the hospital, then we're not needed, and they went for other work.

In the 1960's, when everyone was into natural stuff, many women discovered natural birth! Midwives! The number of midwives went from 50 to 600. But many midwives worked in doctors' offices. They were working there because the doctors knew that's what pregnant women wanted. Only the midwives didn't really work as midwives, just as nurses. They were only there because the doctors knew that if they didn't have a midwife working under them, the pregnant women would go to another doctor who did have a midwife. The doctors used the midwives to get business, and then took much more money from them.

In the 1980's and 90's the midwives that worked in hospitals, who are called nurse-midwives, started to get angry. They decided that they wanted to work independently. Soon they nagged enough and got their wish with a couple of conditions. First, a doctor had to supervise the birth. There is one big problem with that condition. Very few doctors will agree to supervise a midwife because if something were to go wrong, the doctor is held responsible and can be sued. Also, anyone who wants to become a midwife must go to a Midwifery College. There are some problems with this condition as well. People who were already midwives were forced to pay thousands of dollars to get a degree in something they already knew how to do through apprenticing. Another problem is that these colleges teach people only to be a nurse-midwife, and that is basically only a nurse.

Today there are still women who work independently. Because this is illegal in some states, they are at risk of being put in jail. We, as a society, need to stop treating midwives as if they are witches and give them the same rights that doctors have. This way women will have the right to choose a midwife to help them during birth since midwives know as much, if not more, about birth than a doctor who went through medical school. As for the so-called "witches" of long ago, these women died knowing many secrets, maybe even the cures for deadly diseases such as AIDS and cancer. Since they are dead, we have lost a great deal because, as a song says, "I feel the fire burning my bones, all my knowledge dies with me."

Tiffany, the author of the following article, is also a Free School kid:

THE GIRL WHO WALKED IN HARRIET TUBMAN'S FOOTSTEPS

by Tiffany Saxon-Davis, age 9

I walked. I walked to Syracuse from Auburn, New York. I walked because I wanted to walk where Harriet Tubman did. Harriet Tubman was a black woman who saved over 300 slaves by sneaking to get them to freedom. I walked with peace walkers from Japan and one man from India and Americans and a black woman from Albany. The weather was sunny, then windy and then it started snowing. Then the sun came out and it was still windy though. I walked about fourteen miles and rested about four times. My feet were tired and in the middle I was cold. I only took a rest because my ankles were really, really hurting.

I wasn't ever scared, but if I was a slave I would be. I think that the slaves were afraid wondering where they were going to go and were they going to make it. I wanted to go on this walk because I wanted to feel what the slaves might have felt a little bit, to experience what it was like. Not too many people get to do what I did. I learned that it was hard for the slaves and that they did a lot of work when they were slaves. It would be hard to be beaten when they were and they did a lot of work and they weren't free. The slaves went through a lot of hard stuff. Slavery is not good because how would you feel if you had to do all this work. It is not right to buy people; it would be like buying an animal and it is not right.

I believe the slave owners should have been treated like slaves for about a week to see what it was like. Then let go and ask them if they thought we should still make slaves. If they thought it was still okay, then treat them like slaves a little longer.

Maybe this happened because the owners didn't want to do all this work and they heard there was some other people who didn't have any weapons, so they thought to capture them and have them do all the work. The owners got more money because they didn't have to pay the workers.

I would tell another kid to go to experience what it is like to walk where the slaves did and where a woman named Harriet Tubman did. She was really, really brave. I could have been brave, but not that brave. If you ever get a chance to experience it, you really, really should because it is really great!

From the E-mail Communications Network:

AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD'S PERSPECTIVE ON "EXPLAINING GOD"

Written by Danny Dutton, age 8, from Chula Vista, California for his third grade homework assignment to "Explain God," and sent on via e-mail by a friend of a friend who happens to be a minister.

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to put in place of ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way He doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk, He can just leave that up to the mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, as some people, like preachers and things, pray other times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this. As He hears everything, not only prayers, there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere. Which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your parent's head and asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and doing miracles and trying to teach people about God who didn't want to learn. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind like his Father and He told His Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said O.K. His Dad (God) appreciated everything He had done and all His hard work on earth so He told Him He didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So He did. And now He helps His Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing which things are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important, of course. You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to hear you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to Church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong! And, besides, the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around when you're scared in the dark or when you can't swim very good and you get thrown in real deep water by big kids. But you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and He can take me back anytime he pleases. And that is why I believe in God.

* * * * *

From the North Carolina School for the Deaf:

I got an e-mail letter last fall from a teacher, Erika, of a class of amazing kids of mixed high school ages at the North Carolina School for the Deaf (517 West Fleming Drive in Morgantown, NC 28655), as suggested by a teacher at Arthur Morgan School in Burnsville, SC (long-time contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ), offering to send on her kids' writings. I wrote back enthusiastically and received her packet. I responded as follows:

I just got your packet with the kids' writings, and Chad's on top! I am overwhelmed with the sweetness, the goodness, the SOULS of these young people! How fortunate you are; how fortunate they are to have you! Tell them, please, how happy I am with their pieces, and that I will be printing them in the journal just as they are!

Erika wrote me back as follows:

OH THIS IS VERY GOOD NEWS!! I will tell them first thing when they return from Thanksgiving about this. You don't know how happy I am to hear this and I think it will make thier hearts jump. We have been writing and writing and submitting for months with very little success. This is great!!!!!!

Me again: And make sure they know that it won't be out till late spring, so they won't get too discouraged. And if they come up with any more between now and then, do send them on.

Erika: As a matter of fact, I have another class of 7 students that are a little slower (not mentally, but like lazy-butts if you will excuse the term) that I am working on. One in particular wants to become a poet and he does excellent work (a long story about how I feel he has been SORELY overlooked for most of his life) and I will gather that work as soon as possible. ...

I wrote back saying how deeply touched I had been by the writings, and especially by one particular piece written by a boy named Chad expressing his love of Jesus and describing his inner visions. I asked her about him. Erika responded:

Chad is an extremely devoted Christian and believe me, it has caused much controversy in the school. I support him in all his beliefs and he never wanes from his issues. I have never ever seen such a devout Christian young man in all my life. But he is very "open" too. He will discuss Jesus with anyone and he will discuss Him freely. It is such a long story on this side, but Chad NEEDS to be singled out. He just isn't like the other kids, YET he IS strong enough to hold his own. Very interesting situation with him. I hope that makes sense.

And I was afraid to send the poem to you, yet this is ALL he writes about. So I try to look at the magazines and make educated guesses which ones will be appropriate to send. Anyway, I decided to go ahead and send his poem and wait for some kind of response. I have had Chad for two years now and know how strongly he feels. He knows that he will probably be rejected because of his Christian writings and most Christian magazines don't publish our kind of work. AAUGH, it has been frustrating.

My only "advice" is that Chad is a very traditional Christian who takes the Bible literally, but he IS open and I trust that you will do a fine explanation of the picture. It will touch him very much, I assure you. And it touches me that Chad's words have touched you. Believe me, that is a great blessing to him and to me.

And thanks again for caring, for sharing your world with me, with us! Thanks for letting us be a part of your world and I, personally, can't thank you enough.

Love, Erika

Here are the writings:

MY EXPERIENCE BEING DEAF

by Shane Pennington Age: 16 Grade: 11th

It started on March 16, 1980, the day I was born. That day the doctor and my mom thought I was a perfect baby but I wasn't. Until I was three years old, I had suffered through my mom being mad at me for not listening to her or obeying her. My mom keeps giving me a whipping for every time I don't do what she says. Really, through those years no one knew I was deaf.

One day, I went to the doctor for a check up and my doctor told my mom that I might need a ear check up. The doctor thought that I might have a hearing loss because my mom told the doctor of me not listening to her or obeying her. So, I was three that time and when I went to the ear checked up and found out that I had hearing loss since I was born. My mom felt bad because of what she did to me since I have not listened to her or obeyed. So, now my mother knew that I was deaf and she started to try to let me be able to understand her. She started to tap my shoulders when she needs me. I did feel better and I know how much my mother didn't mean what she did to me.

That year I went to pre-school in Winston-Salem called Knollwood Pre-school. They had a deaf class there and I learned sign language there. Also, I made friends like Timothy and Jonathan. Knollwood Pre-school had a speech class where you have to learn how to use your voice right. While I was in pre-school, I learn how deaf people use the phone and how they can understand the TV. How deaf can understand the TV is closed caption for the TV. The closed caption is for deaf people to understand what the person says on TV. People who can hear, they can understand the TV by the volume of the TV and deaf can't, the deaf have to use closed caption. Closed caption show words on the bottom of the TV to say what the person on the TV said.

I learned that deaf have a phone that is called TTY. The TTY is more like a very small computer that has a narrow screen that shows words. First, you have to put the phone on the TTY and it has small keyboard type back when you communicate with someone you speak to on phone. When that person speaks back the words will show from the right to the left. If I use the hearing telephone then I would never understand the phone as much as a hearing person can.

If I want to talk to communicate a person who can hear, I could use paper and write back and forth to communicate.

Another way for me to understand is if the person to speaks slowly.

When I first started elementary school, I went to a public school called Latham Elementary School in Winston-Salem. I started to talk with other kids who can hear by speaking. I started to learn how to speak like them and try to hear better. I had hearing aids, they are a little ear mold that I put in my ear to make me to hear something better. I pass a lot of classes there. I don't go to the classes with the hearing kids, I go to classes with deaf kids. The deaf class is where teachers can sign and where deaf students are. There were about ten students in the deaf class.

When I went to middle school called Philo Middle School, I was in the sixth grade and I could hear a lot better than I could in my young age. I have been using hearing aids that helps me hear. I started to go to the classes with the hearing kids. I did pass some and fail some, "no one is perfect." By the time I got to eighth grade, Timothy told me about North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton. North Carolina School for the Deaf is a school only for deaf kids. I started to think about going to the deaf school for high school. I thought about it and I decided to go there and see if I like it better than public school or not.

When I first went to North Carolina School for the Deaf, I like it better than public school because I could get more friends than public school. Also, kids in the public school have been insulting me because of my deafness. Like deaf people are dumb and can't do anything. North Carolina School for the Deaf kids treat me like brothers and sisters. In some way I miss public school is some of my friends who didn't insults me. I am now in the eleventh grade and I still have a great time here. In North Carolina School for the Deaf they have different sports for the deaf to play. They have football, volleyball, basketball, and softball. North Carolina School for the Deaf play against different deaf schools in different states. I played football and basketball at North Carolina School for the Deaf. Also, North Carolina School for the Deaf help me learn how to do things myself. Like wash clothes, set time for dutys, and do my homework. The reason I have duties is to help my habit to clean my room. When I get to the out world I will have the habit to keep my house clean. This is about me being deaf and how much suffering from the kids insulting me for nine years in the public school.

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I'm sorry I don't seem to have an author's name for the one that follows! Perhaps he'll write us a letter complaining, which I can publish in a future issue:

My report is on Argentina. Argentina is surrounded by Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay. All these countries, excepting Brazil, speak Spanish.

Argentina has a size of 1,068,000 square miles. It is located at the south end of South America and had a population of about 37,969,000 in 1994.

In the early 1500's the Spanish traveled to Argentina. After that, many other people settled there, but Spanish stuck. Today, Argentina's government works like this: there are two houses, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Both the President and Vice-President must be Catholic. The President appoints members of the Cabinet. There is a six year term.

Argentina has a mild climate. Because it's south of the equator, the north gets the hottest, and the south the coldest. The average January temperature is 70 degrees Fahrenheit. The average July temperature is 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

The main Industries of Argentina are in food processing, motor vehicles, textiles, and hides. Its main agriculture is in grains, sugar cane, beef, and oil seeds. Logically, its exports are meat, wheat, corn and vegetable oil.

THE THUNDERS OF PARADISE

by Chad Davis

All people are in a state of solitude because the island of love have failed to give support to each other. Love has gone astray from among the Carribean people that lives in the Caribbeans island. Love is like lost sheep. Love can be lost if there is hate in the Caribbean islands, so love can get lost because of hate.

God is the inventor of Love because God is Love. Love is found from the Thunders of Paradise because they have found love and joy by receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. Jesus came from glory and he was born in a manger and grow up to do ministry for his real Father God. Jesus have died a vicious death, but he did it for all of us because he loves us. If we all could have seen his eyes. His eyes was full of mercy and love. Jesus loves us all. Don't just be obsessed with Jesus's death. He arose from the grave.

Death and Sin has no dominance over him. Jesus did it for us all. I am saying this again becuase this is different. It is not about his death, anymore. This is about his ressurrection. We can really learn to love and accept each other, if we just simply believe in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God. Love will lift us up if we learn to be in unity and in harmony with One God above us. Love lifts us up means that there will be too much love and there won't be enough room for hate. Love will be in a higher place than hate. As we serve him, God will faithfully honor us, if we do his will, and not our own.

The people from the Caribbeans have finally got their love back and are rejoicing because of that period of receiving Jesus Christ. They will serve him from then on because he is the Lord of Lords And King of Kings!! He will come back again to gather us Christians home to Paradise. (heaven) The love of the people hopes to keep their love until the day each one of them die. They will die with faith in Christ Jesus. They will all face the Almighty God before their eyes and be judged according to their works.

Thunders of Paradise is Jesus Christ who is willing to love everyone and he always will love everyone. Jesus Christ is the Lord of those Caribbean people. Jesus is like the root of the tree and we are the branches. That means that no one can live in the spiritual realms without Jesus Christ. That means he can be Lord of our lives, People of the World!!

Chad Davis Grade: 11 Age: 17 will be 18 on Thanksgiving.
November 1, 1996, revised on November 13, 1996

FREED

Crying the word hope
I think I'll see someday.
Longing in my mind I can't
see who I am anymore.

Someday I think hope will
be there for me. Dreaming
in my cell for a free ride
with my precious memories.

Daybreak I awake a new day
in my still young life seeing
signs of strength through
acts of faith in myself.

By night I feel all the
emotions stir within
myself. I stand proud
to feel freed of myself.

—Matthew Rogers

WHERE AM I?

Under the tree beside my house.
The tree is huge and it has big juicy apples
hanging on its branches.
The apples are as big as a basketball ball.
Image how juicy it will be!
I move to the wooden shelter at the back o
the house.
It is small and I can fit through the tiny
doorway.

Inside the shelter are piles of chopped woods for the fireplace.
I leave the shelter and look around.
At my eye view, I see nothing but great fields of green grounds.
"Timmy! It is supper time!", My mother yelled.
Rats, my mother found me standing front of the shelter.
I ran inside and saw my mother's warm homemade apple pie.
I sat down and swooped the apple pie in my mouth and told my mother...
"Thank you mom for finding me!"

—Timothy Hodges
Copyright 1996

SUMMER

Sipping a cool drink
Kool Aid that I tastes
Orange flavor that I tastes
Let my entire body to rest
Enjoy the cool tastes while the sun's shining

—Scott Eller

"HERO"

Zeus is king of gods,
he become "not" hero and bad mood
people hate him because
Zeus can't swim!
He is good for fighting,
but he have one problem... he can't swim.
He is thinking how to swim.
But he have an idea,
that he use an inner tube which is a black circle.
He smiles in the ocean.
But people never see this.
Because this is B.C.,
Zeus's idea was the first inner tube.
People call him to come back "hero."
He is in a good mood.

LEAVES

Falling in the cold
Coming back in the spring time
Showing the new leaves

—Keith Clark
Copyright 1997

MOTHER

Mother is so kind to kids by taking care of them.
Mother will always tell joyful stories about Barney.
She will always keep your heart warm during winter time.
Mother will cover you up with a nice thick blanket when,
you take a nap or go to bed.
Mother will always think of you forever and ever until her death and
will always watch you grow and get older over the clouds thinking about you.

—Phillip Coble
Copyright 1997

SISTERS

Sisters are there for you,
through problems.
Sisters are there to give,
you advice on boys.
Sisters are there to help you,
when your parents are busy.
Sisters are there to listen ,
when parents don't understand you.

—Chasity Hicks
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WHEN SPRING COMES

When Spring Comes,
I will be sitting under a big old maple tree,
Watching the bluebirds flying,
Drinking my ice-cold lemonade,
Eating my ham sandwich.

When Spring Comes,
Will bring fresh air,
Making me feel fresh,
Feeling very energetic,
Running in a meadow.

When Spring Comes,
I'll be ready and playing,

I'll have me a party,
Inviting my friends to celebrating,
Welcoming Springtime,
BYE wintertime, Hello spring!

—*Chasity Hicks*
Copyright 1997

The following letter came from Shawn Halstead's mother Margie in Vermontville, New York:

This is my first year homerschooling my son, Shawn. He is using the Laurel Springs Curriculum. He wrote this poem for English. He mails his work to a teacher at Laurel Springs. She wrote back and told him he was a poet, keep on writing.

ANIMALS

by Shawn Halstead, grade 6

All animals are so sweet to meet,
Even if they annoy you or sit in your seat.
Dogs, hogs, and kitties to,
I love all the animals, don't you ?

We eat them, we beat them, we tug at their hair,
And treat them in other ways that are really unfair.
So if you own an animal treat it like you should,
Feed it and pet it and tell it its good.

Thanks, Margie, and thanks, Shawn

In the Fall, 1996 Children's Issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ, I reprinted, with permission from the editor, Arun Toké, the winners of the annual Skipping Stones *Book Awards for 1996. One of those winners was Mikaela Crank, who is Navajo, as she tells us. To my delight, I got the following letter from her enclosing more writings. Thanks, Mikaela!*

P.O. Box 2291, Dennehotso, AZ 86535

Dear Mary,

Skipping Stones sent me your journal and I enjoyed reading it. I am sending you three of my writings to you. You said you wanted some more of my stories.

My birthday was in February so now I am 11. I will be attending Kayenhta Middle School next fall. It is on the Navajo reservation, in Arizona. I hope you enjoy my writings.

THE PERFECT SIGHT

by Mikaela Crank

As I started my walk on a steep hill I could feel the pain in my legs and then I knew that this would be a hard journey. The path was so rocky and steep that every 30 feet I went, I had to stop. The scorchering sun made it worst! When I continued, I saw so many plants that were around me that I thought I was in a jungle. Later I stopped to rest where there was water flowing very rapidly. I splashed water on my face which made me feel cool.

As I continued, I saw other people who were also hiking up. While drinking a sip of water, my throat felt like the North Pole and not the Sahara Desert. I hummed to myself so time might fly faster, later I realized I was getting closer to the end. While hiking, I smelled the pine trees and other beautiful scents around me. Soon I felt little sprinkles on me.

Then I saw I was at the place I wanted to be at after that long hike. I climbed on a rock and whispered, "This is the perfect sight I had ever seen." I looked at the waterfall flowing down and spreading a huge mist. I splashed water on my sweaty face and felt the water running down my back, giving me an ice-cold feeling.

I said a prayer to the Gods above and soon know they would read it. I got sort of cold and felt goose bumps ready to form on my skin. I looked at the glorious waterfall one last time and then I started to go back down the mountain. I felt proud of myself and knew that my journey was worth it. The best part was to see one of mother nature's precious things.

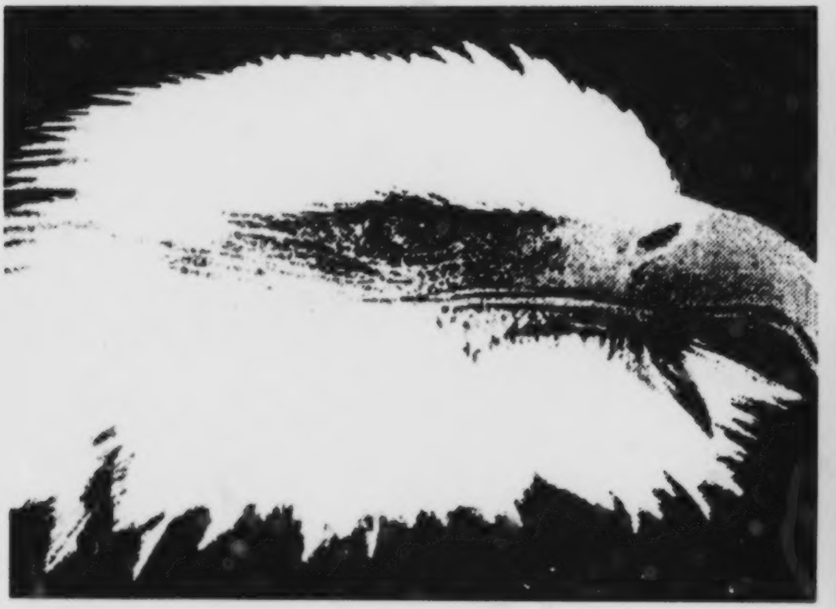
SCARLET

by Mikaela Crank

Soars across the mesa,
Under the sizzling sun,
Blinding the eagle,
Looking in his eyes,
Seeing his diamond eyes,
Sparkling beautifully,
His majestic soft feathers
reflect,

To the blue sky,
Like a rainbow,
After a cold storm,
Night comes,
The reflection gone,
But only stars you see,
Scarlet stars,
As an eagle.

...And Mikaela sent us a picture of an eagle:



My Special Place

My grandma's home is special to me because this area is a vast, dry desert that shows my ancestors past.
Pride embraces me as joy enters my heart. I always feel like as if I was in heaven with nature as glee shimmers on me.
It is like a meadow south of Dennehotso near the mellow creek. The narrow brown liquid gushed out and the sweet breeze mixed with the cedar tree fragrance.
Easily, I could feel the brittle yucca prick my skin and the enormous scarlet sticks stayed parallel down the eternal creek.
I felt as if I was out in a jungle where everything is free giving me pride in my dark black eyes knowing we are equal with everything.
The faded smoke of a fire arose from a dwelling. Sounds of the jumbo sheep startled me which made me terrufued.
"Splash!" Splash!" The sheep crossed the twinkling water and the sight of (chilq que) Mormon tea gave my tongue a dryness like a huge sand dome.
The violet, amber skyline outlined the vanishing sun and the midst you can see the sphere moon travel against the elegant, puffy clouds.

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Grades K-12

And here are two poems by my grandson Oliver Leue, which he sent on by e-mail:

SICK

Hurting, Aching, Screaming,
Moaning
My brain is gone
There is nothing left
Hoping to be well
But always in pain
Feel better one day
But it always returns
Sick forever
Forever dead.

AFTER THE WAR

When darkness stops
And Light comes in
The earth becomes alive again.

The Evil has left
The Devil is gone
Come and join me
in the sun.

People in the streets
with hate in their eyes
Not trying to forgive
Only trying to die.

The war is over
The soldiers have gone
But the anger in the streets
Will always be more.

JOHANNES PICKER'S TRIP TO USA, 9/96-11/96

Reprinted from *AERO*

My name is Johannes. I'm 15 years old. I live in Austria with my parents and 11 of my brothers and sisters. I have homeschooled for most of my life. I lived for four years in Turkey and most of the rest of the time in Austria. My family traveled a lot. I think homeschooling is a good way to learn because I have more time for things that I am really interested in.

I first met Jerry Mintz in Austria at the Hadera Democratic Schools conference. He taught me how to play ping pong. I met him again at the democratic schools conference in Israel. My family drove there in cars, about 10,000 kilometers, through Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan.

At the Israel conference, Jerry asked me why I don't speak English (Kurt translated). I said that I would have to go to the country where they speak English to learn it right. Jerry said that maybe I could come to visit him for a while to learn English.

At first, in the beginning, I didn't think it was possible. But my friend, Nicolas, my drum teacher, said he wanted to go, anyway. So I thought that together, maybe we could go. He then made the arrangements, because I didn't speak English. Then Nicolas was interested in doing something with music while he was in the US, and he invited Andy, a base player in Germany, who had been in a band with him. They wanted to do workshops in music for kids at alternative and other schools

We got here on August 31st. I had no first impressions. I was really tired! The first days we went to a club where we could go swimming and play ping pong and tennis. The next day we went to the US Open Tennis. Jerry spoke with the people there. He said he had students visiting and they gave him some passes. We saw Edburg in his last Open.

A week later we went to a TV station in New York City to be on the Gordon Elliott Show. Jerry was a specialist there and we were in the audience. I didn't really know what was going on because I didn't understand much English at this time.

On the same day we drove to Albany, the capital of New York State. We went to visit the Free School. Jerry left the next day, to go to meetings and conferences. Andy and Nicolas did a workshop at the Free School and stayed for ten days, but I stayed for three weeks, and had a nice time.

At the Free School I got a chance to really learn how to speak English for the first time. I got the impression that everyone is happy with the school the way it is.

I took a bus to New York City. Nicolas and Andy picked me up and we went to see the Empire State Building. From there I saw the Statue of Liberty for the first time. A few weeks later I actually got to go there.

Two days later Jerry and I and Anthony, a 15 year old homeschooler from the Catskill Mountains in New York went on a train trip to Iowa, where Jerry had a workshop to train teachers who were interested in learning about alternative education. The workshop was at Drake University. I was there as a homeschooler from Austria. On the way back by train we stopped in Chicago to see the Sears Tower, the highest building in the world.

When we got back to New York City, I went straight to the Catskills with Anthony. I was with his family for about ten days. I didn't see his father much after he drove us up there because he works in New York City as a lighting technician on TV shows like Sesame Street and the Cosby Show.

I met Anthony's music teacher and went to classes with him. Actually Anthony is a homeschooler, but he takes some music classes in the public school. For me it was really interesting how this teacher worked with this class.

I think I learned the most English while I was there, meeting people and talking with Anthony.

After that I went with Jerry and Anthony's older sister, Lilly, to the National Homeschool Association Conference in Massachusetts. The homeschoolers seemed normal compared to other children I've seen in the USA. But I think that the whole situation for American homeschoolers and children in general is much more protective than for children in Austria and other countries I've seen. For example, for American children it seems normal to them to not be able to go on a train or a bus on their own.

After the conference I went to Jerry's house for a week. Then he had to go to do a workshop at an Indian reservation in Michigan for about a week. He was trying to help them because they were having serious problems at their new school, trying to make it more democratic for the students.

During this time I went to Shelter Island to visit friends of Jerry's. They are homeschoolers who have two children, 15 and 11. This was an important time for me because I finally got to play the drums again for the first time in two months, and I had a really great time with the family.

My main reason for coming here was to learn English, and I am satisfied with how much I have learned. I think I learned more than I thought I would, but I see now that I might have been able to learn even more. I would have worked more on learning how to read and write in English. For sure, it makes it easier to learn those things now that I can speak English. I think I lost a lot of time the first month because I didn't start speaking English soon enough. Finally, I just decided to start speaking, even if it didn't sound right. I found out that this was the best way, because people told me when it was not right.

From being here I got a better perspective about what I want, and what I want to do and how I live. I really didn't have this perspective before. I think that in my family we lived at very close quarters and this was difficult, and I had a chance to see myself in many different situations, with different kinds of people. And seeing my home situation from here also teaches me something. I think I have changed my feeling about my situation and myself.

Read what one of our reviewers says about
The Journal of Family Life

From: *New Age Journal's Sourcebook for 1996:*
THE EDITORS of *The Journal of Family Life: A Quarterly for Empowering Families* know that family life embraces a whole range of emotions and relationships from birth to death. Each 64-page issue focuses on a theme related to family life—couples, children, grandparents, in-laws, culturespirituality, money. Although interviews with the likes of *Soul* man Thomas Moore, midwife Ina May Gaskin, and educator John Taylor Gatto spice up the mix, most of the articles are written by regular people sharing their thoughts and experiences. Reading this grassroots *Journal*—which is dedicated to the idea that social change starts with family change—is a bit like having a conversation with wise and interesting neighbors, who admit both their failures and their successes in hopes of lending a helping hand.
72 Philip St., Albany NY 12202; (518) 432-1578. Quarterly; $20/year; a sustaining subscription ($30) includes a year's free subscription to *ΣΚΟΛΕ*

REVIEWS:

How to Tape Instant Oral Biographies

by William Zimmerman,
Guarionex Press, Ltd., 1996

Reviewed by David Harrison

I have always felt that asking honest, simple, open-hearted questions is the quickest and surest path to knowledge and understanding. In *How to Tape Instant Oral Biographies,* Mr. Zimmerman has created a simple guidebook for the masters of such questions—children. The book provides an easily readable and well-organized outline for constructing a concise, revealing interview. While the stated goal of the book is to uncover the life stories of family members, particularly grandparents, it quickly becomes apparent that Mr. Zimmerman's techniques and suggestions are just as helpful and effective for interviews with friends, neighbors, or even complete strangers.

With the savvy of an experienced journalist, Mr. Zimmerman lays out a step-by-step approach to conducting an interview. He discusses early on the importance of learning about family—its place in history, the interconnectedness of relatives across generations, the sadness of those who are deprived of this knowledge. He rightly states that taped interviews are a means of unveiling and preserving these often hidden elements of a person or of an entire family.

In addition to these philosophical observations, Mr. Zimmerman goes on to share with the reader any number of subtle technical aspects of interviewing, from choosing the proper medium (audio or video), to the selection and placement of recording equipment, to tricks for putting anxious interviewees at ease. By the time the readers conduct their interview, they have discovered that the actual selection and asking of questions is by far the easiest component of the art.

After reading through the book, I decided to present the idea of conducting audio-taped interviews to my class of 4th through 6th graders at The Free School in Albany, NY. Initially, I followed Mr. Zimmerman's approach of aiming interviews at grandparents and older family members. I quickly discovered from my students, however, that none of them had the opportunity to easily interview these relatives. Through the hazards of broken families, distance, or death, not a single student out of twelve had an even remotely intimate relationship with a grandparent who lived close by. I suddenly understood more clearly the passion and urgency which often pervades the pages of Mr. Zimmerman's book.

Despite this initial setback, the students seemed intrigued with the idea of the interviews, particularly as showcase pieces for a class magazine they will be publishing this spring. I suggested to the few students who had grandparents in distant places the idea of phone interviews, but the idea was not well received, lacking the excitement of an intimate conversation.

Finally, through reviewing the sample questions provided in the book and brainstorming together, three students came forward with ideas for interviews. An eleven-year-old boy—Isaac—wanted to interview his mother, who works as the registrar at the New York State Museum, located just up the street from the school. This idea led him to thoughts of interviewing the director of the museum as well. Two eleven-year-old girls—Sarah and Hannah—decided to interview a woman in her seventies who had lived in Albany and the surrounding area for over fifty years.

The results of these interviews were astounding. From the simplest questions like "Where were you born?" came pouring forth beautifully subtle portrayals of the past and hidden lives of ordinary people. In Isaac's interview of his mother, simple questions about the nature of her job revealed the humble and profound joy she takes in her work. At a time when so few children have any connection to the working lives of their parents, insights such as these take on tremendous significance.

In Isaac's conversation with Louis Levine—the director of the New York State Museum—the compelling accuracy of Mr. Zimmerman's faith in the power of interview becomes even more apparent. An interview by a grade-school boy armed with a list of simple questions to be asked of a stranger uncovers the rich and subtle story of a second-generation immigrant's son.

When asked "When and where were you born?", Mr. Levine replied, "In the Bronx in the year nineteen-hundred and fifty." He paused, and for a moment I thought that would be all he would offer. But he continued, "When someone hit a home run at Yankee Stadium, I could hear it. I could hear the crowd." The last sentence "I could hear the crowd" was offered in such a reverential tone! You could hear in his voice the personal and emotional importance of that simple remembered sound.

Suddenly, this austere professional man in his forties had a context, literally a storied past. Of course, those crowds were cheering in the fifties and early sixties for the likes of Mickey

Mantle and Roger Maris. A passing recollection like this one placed Mr. Levine in a richly remembered, almost mythical, time and place—New York City in the 1950s.

The next question Isaac asked was, "What job would you be doing or would you like to do if you were not the director of the museum?" Mr. Levine replied, "I could be happy as a biologist, or just as easily be a doctor or a lawyer." This reply fitted beautifully with his answer to the previous question, revealing the professional aspirations and material values so often instilled in the children of immigrants to this country.

It is remarkable that both of Isaac's interviews—with his mother and with Mr. Levine—took less than fifteen minutes. In about the same amount of time it takes to watch the nightly news or an evening sitcom, Isaac was able to significantly uncover the history of his mother and a stranger.

The interview done by Sarah and Hannah provided not only the most richly textured and most historically significant material of the three interviews, but also gave the girls a valuable lesson in that old maxim about "the best laid plans of mice and men." Before the girls could even position their recording equipment or utter their first question, Marta Maria Schweiger Carey—Maria, for short—began recounting her life as a child in Germany between the world wars.

Over the next hour, in response to widely spaced questions by the girls, she created interwoven images of her village in Germany, the post-World War II countryside outside of Albany, and her later and current life in the city itself. Many of her stories were flavored with mysticism and magic, like her remembrances that "Everyone in my village sang. All the time. Everywhere they went." and "My father was a forest ranger. He would take us to the woods and hide us in the bushes. He would call the deer and feed them hay from his hands. He was the ranger and the deer knew only him."

Her most powerful message to the girls, however, concerned the way men should treat women, or, more precisely, the way women should demand that they be treated by men. Her words were moving, inspired by her own experience of marrying a cruel American because "there were no German men after the war." She warned the girls, "Never let a man think that he can come and take you over. There is more to a woman than that. Every woman and every man has to have privacy. There is no freedom, there is no happiness, without privacy."

This lesson, and others like it, came from a woman whom the girls had never met, never spoken to before, over the course of one hour on a weekday afternoon when most other kids were "in school." It carried more meaning and more value than anything they could have learned in a classroom during that same hour. Mr. Zimmerman has provided a means for young people to connect with their parents, their grandparents, men and women such as Mr. Levine and Maria. Mr. Zimmerman, I'm sure, would agree with one of the final quotes issued by Maria when she said, "Life is beautiful if you have people to teach you." Thank you to people like Maria for being such good teachers. Thank you, Mr. Zimmerman, for teaching us how to listen and learn.

And thank you, Dave! This is Dave's first year as a teacher at the Free School. We think he'll do! If you are a subscriber to the Journal of Family Life, his article on his family appears in the "Generations" issue—Vol. 3, No. 1—"The Lesson of Memory, A Family Memoir." Reading it, you begin to understand what makes Dave who he is! But you should also see him coaching his inner city kids' Little League team!

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You can also contact us via e-mail to
MarySKOLE@aol.com

BENJAYA'S GIFTS

by M'haletta & Carmella B'Hahn
published by Hazelwood Press
England, 1996.
Available from Simple Gifts Books
20 Elm St. basement, Albany, NY 12202
paperback, $15.00 plus shipping $2.00

Reviewed by Betsy Mercogliano

This is an extraordinary book. A true story about the birth, life and death of a boy, it is about the cycle of life in a poignantly shortened passage for one family. This family chose to embrace both his birth and his death as gifts of loving and learning in ways that have thoughtful challenges for many of us. I read this book in one sitting—the only way really, because it just flows with the events and the images that the authors put together in their writing.

The authors are Benjaya's mother (Carmella) and his grandmother (M'haletta). The book includes the story from each of their perspectives, including diary entries from both of these women as they lived through the events. Abel, Benjaya's father, also has included passages that bring us into his life as he experiences Benjaya's life. The transitions from one person to another gave me a real sense of this family as a whole and how they were all dealing with the changes they lived through—from the conception of Benjaya through his celebrated birth in water, following his spirited life and his death by drowning at age five. I felt as if I was sitting in the room with these people as they told their story. It was this openness that brought me to understand how they came to hold what many people would suffer over for years—the death of a young child—as a gift of learning about the human spirit.

I have lost two babies myself as stillbirths, so at first I had some trepidation about reading this book because that was a painful, frightening time in my life. While I feel at peace with those experiences now, I learned a great deal through that grief and at times, can still mourn over the time as a difficult passage in my life and the life of my family. Carmella and M'haletta brought that same feeling of the depth of passage they went through with the death of Benjaya. Having a deeply spiritual sense of life as a part of the whole circle of creation, plus being open to the metaphors apparent in Benjaya's life, gave this family strength to see a "big picture" that they share in this book.

Most noticeably absent in this family's account is the emotion of blame—a really painful emotion that complicates a lot of situations and makes it difficult to see things clearly. The choice Carmella, Abel and M'haletta made—actually the whole family made, from their accounts in the book—to stay open to grief and love *at the same time* as they dealt with Benjaya's death and not to fall into blaming seemed to be one of the most powerful lessons in this story. With the energy this freed up between all of them, they were able to create a memorial for Benjaya that highlighted the gifts he gave them, including the deep opening that comes with deep grief, the relationships he touched and the need to live and love fully after this death.

It also left them receptive to Benjaya's continued communication with them. Writing this book clearly gave them the opportunity to expand their contacts for receiving the gifts his life and death had made available which that brief life still offers: the gift of living life fully, of loving fully, reminding us that we are all a part of something bigger than ourselves—a gift which is supports us to grow. This is a book that I think parents will want to read to keep a heart-open perspective on life with children, who really do not belong to us but come through us, as the Gibran poem says.

Video Review:

Hello! From Around the World—Ghana
Copyright 1996 by Ernst Interactive Media
Naples, NY (800) 554-3556 ($39.95)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

As part of an irregular series of "factory tests" of educational materials sent to us, I recently showed this video to approximately two dozen Free School students, ages five through ten. In short, the kids loved it; and when asked for their rating on a one-to-ten scale, ninety percent of the audience boisterously called out, "Ten." Only one student rated the video as low as seven.

And this reviewer was equally impressed. Nothing trendy or manipulative here; instead what I found was a very down-to-earth, evenly-paced look at the history and culture of an important, tradition-rich West African nation. The videography was excellent throughout as the narrator took us through a detailed explanation of the lives and customs of traditional Ghanean tribespeople. Then she briefly but accurately described the process of urbanization and we were treated to a bird's eye view of life in a modern African city. My kids were surprised to see how many similarities there are between urban life there and here in this country.

Along the way the video also examines the impacts of slavery and later, colonialism on the people of Ghana. Stark images of the ruins of eighteenth century slave-holding prisons had the kids riveted to the screen and served as a perfect complement to our study of the history of slavery and the Underground Railroad. I especially appreciated the way the video neither dumbs down the material for its elementary-aged audience nor succumbs to the modern-day temptation to draw them in artificially with Sesame Street-style antics. The presentation is informative and lively at the same time, and succeeded in holding this audience's attention for the entire 45 minutes. It could even have been longer.

No great fan of the video medium—most kids watch far too much as it is—I found this one by Ernst Interactive Media to be a terrific source for facts and imagery about a country and culture very different from our own. It is currently one in a series of ten award-winning videos about different countries from Bali to the Balkans, including our own United States. Having personally witnessed how much our kids got out of it, I recommend it highly and look forward to getting another one.

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JUST FOR FUN:

I know it's raunchy and politically incorrect, but I couldn't resist, having had five of my own and very little permission to express the negative side of parenting! All I can tell you is that, much as I love(d) them, I felt relieved when the last one left home!

This is a real letter submitted to the IRS in the midst of last year's weird and bizarre denial of dependents, exemptions, and credits. We believe the letter speaks for itself. It comes from Christopher Leeds, Assistant Professor, Rush University, Health Systems Management, 1700 W. Van Buren Street, Ste. 126, Chicago, IL 60612, Phone/Voice Mail: 312-942-7107; Fax: 312-942-4957.

Dear Sirs:

I am responding to your letter denying the deduction for two of the three dependents I claimed on my 1994 Federal Tax return. Thank you. I have questioned whether these are my children or not for years. They are evil and expensive. It's only fair that since they are minors and not my responsibility that the government (who evidently is taxing me more to care for these waifs) knows something about them and what to expect over the next year. You may apply next year to reassign them to me and reinstate the deduction.

This year they are yours!

The oldest, Kristen, is now 17. She is brilliant. Ask her! I suggest you put her to work in your office where she can answer people's questions about their returns. While she has no formal training, it has not seemed to hamper her knowledge of any other subject you can name. Taxes should be a breeze; Next year she is going to college. I think it's wonderful that you will now be responsible for that little expense.

While you mull that over keep in mind that she has a truck. It doesn't run at the moment so you have the immediate decision of appropriating some Department of Defense funds to fix the vehicle or getting up early to drive her to school. Kristen also has a boyfriend. Oh joy. While she possesses all of the wisdom of the universe, her alleged mother and I have felt it best to occasionally remind her of the virtues of abstinence, and in the face of overwhelming passion, safe sex. This is always uncomfortable and I am quite relieved you will be handling this in the future. May I suggest that you reinstate Joycelyn Elders, who had a rather good handle on the problem.

Patrick is 14. I've had my suspicions about this one. His eyes are a little too close together for normal people. He may be a tax examiner himself one day if you do not incarcerate him first. In February I was awakened at three in the morning by a police officer who was bringing Pat home. He and his friends were TP'ing houses. In the future would you like him delivered to the local IRS office or to Ogden, UT? Kids at 14 will do almost anything on a dare. His hair is purple. Permanent dye, temporary dye, what's the big deal? Learn to deal with it.

You'll have plenty of time as he is sitting out a few days of school after instigating a food fight. I'll take care of filing your phone number with the vice principal. Oh yes, he and all of his friends have raging hormones. This is the house of testosterone and it will be much more peaceful when he lives in your home. DO NOT leave any of them unsupervised with girls, explosives, inflammables, inflatables, vehicles, or telephones. (I'm sure that you will find telephones a source of unimaginable amusement, and be sure to lock out the 900 and 976 numbers!)

Heather is an alien. She slid through a time warp and appeared quite by magic one year. I'm sure this one is yours. She is 10 going on 21. She came from a bad trip in the sixties. She wears tie-dyed clothes, beads, sandals, and hair that looks like Tiny Tim's. Fortunately you will be raising my taxes to help offset the pinch of her remedial reading courses. Hooked On Phonics is expensive so the schools dropped it. Good news! You can buy it yourself for half the amount of the deduction that you are denying! It's quite obvious that we were terrible parents (ask the other two) so they have helped raise this one to a new level of terror. She cannot speak English. Most people under twenty understand the curious patois she fashioned out of valley girls/boys in the hood/reggae/yuppie/political doublespeak. I don't.

The school sends her to a speech pathologist who has her roll her R's. It added a refreshing Mexican/Irish touch to her voice. She wears hats backwards, pants baggy and wants one of her ears pierced four more times. There is a fascination with tattoos that worries me but I am sure that you can handle it. Bring a truck when you come to get her, as she sort of "nests" in her room and I think that it would be easier to move the entire thing than find out what it is really made of.

You denied two of the three exemptions so it is only fair you get to pick which two you will take. I prefer that you take the youngest; I still go bankrupt with Kristen's college but then I am free! If you take the two oldest then I still have time for counseling before Heather becomes a teenager. If you take the two girls then I won't feel so bad about putting Patrick in a military academy.

Please let me know of your decision as soon as possible as I have already increased the withholding on my W-4 to cover the $395 in additional tax and to make a down payment on an airplane.

Yours Truly,
Bob

Note: The taxpayer in question added this caveat at a later date: "Rats, they sent me the refund and allowed the deductions."

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

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ERRORS AND BLESSINGS

Fred Bay's keen eyes picked up a sentence dropped from our reprint in the Spring issue of John Holt's article which first appeared in the Saturday Evening Post for Feb, 8, 1969. The glitch appears at the end of page 106, near the end of the article. It occurs in the middle of a paragraph in which John is deploring the waste of time and effort teachers are obliged to spend pointing out and correcting cxhildren's mistakes instead of allowing them to make such discoveries for themselves as they go along! The sentence that was cut short should have read:

> ... Our job should be to help the kid when he tells us that he can't find a way to get the right answer. Let's get rid of all this nonsense of grades, exams, marks. ...

Thanks, Fred!

And I wanted to share with you a *barucha* we received from Tom Greening, editor of *The Journal of the Association of Humanistic Psychology*. The following notice appeared in a recent issue of the *JAHP*:

ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education

I am writing this to support the work of Mary Leue, the editor and founder of *ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education*. She is a creative editor who manages to invite people of all ages to write innovative pieces in various styles about education. As a result *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, has published interviews with educational leaders like Urie Bronfenbrenner, Ivan Illich and Jonathan Kozol; profiles of alternative schools around the country; essays by teachers on learning; student writings; academic studies; and reviews of books on education.

Mary Leue founded a small inner city school, The Free School, twenty-seven years ago and devotes her time to editing and publishing two quarterly journals, *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, and the *Journal of Family Life*. About every two years she also publishes a 500-page anthology of outstanding articles which she calls *Challenging the*

Giant - the Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ,. So far three volumes of this anthology have appeared, all of which I recommend.

ΣΚΟΛΕ, presents voices and points of view that are refreshingly different from mainstream discussions of education, and which express the widespread and growing dissatisfaction in this country with conventional schools. As a good editor should, Mary sees that no one point of view dominates, no one writer gets top billing, no particular vision is put on a pedestal. Widely published authors share the space with others whose names are unknown to academia.

Throughout *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, you will find an urgent concern expressed by people who work with children and adolescents in and out of schools. As Mary exhorts us on the book's back cover: "Don't just sit back and stew. Take back your power! Make a start now by deciding what you really want (for your children), then begin working to figure out how to get it."

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Thanks, Tom, and please share our thanks with your friend Professor H. R. Lochenkopf, whose counsel is a small sphere of sanity in a crazy world!

Love,
Mary

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Well, we have a splendid mix for this issue of gifted leaders in the field of education! Jon Thoreau Scott, our interviewee, describes his own experiential background as a former student of the Stelton School, one of the *Escuela Moderna* schools in this country, in the anarchist colony of Stelton, New Jersey. Jon paints us a vivid picture, both of the history and atmosphere of his school, and also of his own experiences there growing up as a child.

Also in this issue are other voices of the Modern School Movement in the words of Alexis Ferm about his wife, Elizabeth Byrne Ferm—the couple known to their students as "Aunty" and Uncle" at the Stelton school during the period Jon was a pupil—and a review by Chris Mercogliano of Paul Avrich's book about the Modern School. We decided that Elizabeth's book, *Freedom in Education*, detailing her personal philosophy and experiences in the educational field was sufficiently significant on the very aspects of teaching and learning that are so often neglected by "educators" as to be serialized in future issues of this publication.

Which belief leads me to an encomium of our dear John Taylor Gatto's latest triumphs in the monumental task he has undertaken of "awakening us from our dogmatic slumbers" (as Kant said of Hume, I believe—or was it Berkeley?)—and particularly the complacent "experts" among us who assume that they know all the answers to our national dilemma concerning the lives of our children! John's tactics work, as you may see by reading his addresses! In vineyards as wildly divergent as the Association for Spirituality in Education (at Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado) and Growing Without Schooling (in Boston, Mass.), John's keynote addresses at their summer conferences were enthusiastically received—and at the ASE talk, John received a four-minute standing ovation! We will be publishing some of these fiery words in future issues. In this one, we offer you Gatto's Pritikin Address at a summer institute at Goddard College from a couple of years ago. He's so prolific, it's hard to keep apace!

But back to this issue. My comment about both Jon AND John—and I could say the same thing about A.S. Neill and his daughter Zoë's Summerhill, Danny, Hanna and Mimsy at Sudbury Valley School, our Free School, Jerry's Mintz's now extinct (alas!) Shaker Mountain School in Burlington, VT, and a few other so-called "democratic" schools both here and abroad, is that, unlike so many institutions which make decisions *for* children including institutions of all kinds which deal with children's lives, especially their education, including even "progressive" colleges like Antioch and Goddard—and some homeschooling families—too many adults forget the issue of WISDOM!

As Robert Bly has pointed out in his *The Sibling Society*, our society prevents people from becoming truly mature. Thus, adults are only as *wise* as their individual characters and experiences have enabled them to become. Too often they fail to question their own assumptions concerning their qualification to speak for children! They forget that children must be allowed to speak for *themselves*, and that when institutional models are being established which assume the power of decision-making *over* children, the children themselves need to be part of that decision-making process! Too often, especially lately, classroom protocol mandates control by the teacher or principal of dissident students by isolating them from group activities or remanding them to their pediatricians to be medicated. Even so apparently innocuous a program as one of regular meditation, as has been advocated by the "spirituality in education" folks, may have as mixed a result as current "released time" programs in one or another of the religious denominations! How teacher-enforced meditation could be distinguished in the minds of active, rebellious little boys from other enforced programs escapes me! Adults who define such meditational practices as "spiritual" perhaps tend to forget their own childhood reactions to "Sunday school" as having quite the opposite effect from the one intended by well-meaning but foolish adults! Children are so much less easily fooled than adults, it seems.

Folly must be a universal human trait. We recently received a fax from Angela Cross, a Free School graduate who now lives in San Francisco and is a member of the Board of the NCACS. Angela, having attended Coalition gatherings for many years as a young student, has a great love for that organization. She was asking for my help with fund-raising ideas—not realizing that I no longer try to play a role in that organization, having done what I could for many years, but without being invited to become a member of the policy-making group. We wish her well in her hopes to help revitalize the Coalition. Many of us have tried and have not succeeded. "Insoluble"problems within institutions (such as in the public schools) often occur because they are defined incorrectly! Money is seldom the solution to such problems.

Spring & Summer Conferences & Gatherings:

NCACS Spring Conference in Chicago

by Tom Ellis, Albany, NY

Tom Ellis is a social scientist who taught at The Free School for a number of years during the 80s and has remained a good friend and a supporter of educational alternatives. We appreciate his discerning comments on the spring gathering of the National Coalition of Alternative Schools.

When I left for this year's annual conference of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS), I thought it might be the last time I would.

The conference was in Chicago. Soon after boarding the train in Rensselaer, NY, I saw Jerry Mintz, the former director of NCACS, who was also on his way to the conference. Jerry had not attended the annual NCACS confenence in recent years and he was not sure how many it had been. I was glad to see Jerry on the train; he and I share many similar ideas about alternative education, and the decline of NCACS during the last seven or eight years.

I desired to attend the 1997 conference for several reasons. For the first time in at least ten years, the conference would be held in a city. NCACS annual conferences had been held in rural areas for at least ten years. I wanted to experience the contrast. I had lived in Chicago during 1980 and was eager to return. And Dorothy Werner had vowed to organize an exciting conference and I knew I would not be disappointed.

And I was not. Dorothy, with the collaboration of the staff and students of both the Roberto Clemente and Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High Schools, created an exciting, well organized conference. Much to my enjoyment, the five-day conference was a serious event with strong leftist themes throughout. It was highly political with a considerable focus on Puerto Rican independence and POWs.

The International Conference Center on North Sheridan Road proved to be a fine site. The food was also excellent. The conference began on Wednesday April 17 with an opening plenary at which all attendees were invited to introduce themselves and describe their schools and projects.

Workshops were held all day Thursday. Among these were several on Puerto Rican politics and culture, Salsa dancing, the family literacy model of education, reading and writing our lives, Hip Hop culture, the politics of tobacco, and encouragement vs. coercion. That evening, José E. Lopez gave a passionate speech and led a discussion on "the decolonizing model of education in the present urban reality." Mr. Lopez, President of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, said that healing and justice in colonized societies cannot occur unless and until the colonial abuse is first acknowledged. He pleaded with listeners to use next year's 100th anniversary of the Spanish American War to learn about longstanding US colonization of many countries and peoples. His was an intellectual presentation in which he linked many issues of oppression.

Friday was a tour day. Conference attendees had a choice of guided morning tours of Puerto Rican, Mexican, or African-American communities and alternative schools in Chicago, afternoons to themselves for sightseeing, and an early evening panel discussion on the criminalization of youth. Friday evening's events were spectacular. Al Williams, who, with his wife, Lisa, cofounded a social service agency and a high school without walls, said, "The criminalization of youth will absorb your child if you are not careful." He said vast numbers of blacks, Hispanics, and poor youth have already been introduced into the corrections system via home monitoring, work release and other programs; Illinois intends to build enough facilities in coming years to incarcerate an additional 86,000 youths; and the number of penitentiaries for youth in Illinois has increased from 18 to 54 since 1988.

Douglas Spalding of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee said the war on drugs is intentionally designed to imprison people of color. More than 1.5 million Americans are in jails and prisons, and 5-6 million in jails and prisons or on probation or parole. He encouraged listeners to build their own institutions.

José Perez also spoke that evening, saying, "History never repeats itself, but historical problems insist on being resolved." He warned that the word "predator" is increasingly being used to describe people of color; prisons are more and more becoming America's concentration camps; the virtue of selfishness must be ended; "live and let live" should be replaced by "live and help others to live;" and concluded by saying, "We must build communities and develop a new ethic."

Later in the evening, Puerto Rican students from various schools and organizations presented *El Grito del Barrio Contra el SIDA*, a "dramatic presentation of theater, art and music with an HIV/AIDS prevention message."

Saturday saw more workshops including one on NCACS renewal, a panel on public and private partnerships, the annual meeting of NCACS, an auction and talent show. Sunday morning was used for a final round of workshops (including an excellent one on multicultural education offered by Ruby Lee Houlihan of the North Country Alternative School, Inc. of Littleton, NH) and a conference evaluation.

The conference was certainly the best in the last three years and one of the better ones I have attended overall. Nevertheless, it had its flaws. There were few (perhaps none) workshops on how to set up an alternative school. Only about 125 persons attended. This is a sharp reduction from the 350 who attended in Escondido ten years ago (my first NCACS conference), the more than 600 at The Farm in Tennessee in 1988, or the 200+ assembled near Roanoke, Virginia three years ago. The high cost this year—$175 for adults—certainly kept some people away (but having an in-doors, urban conference is more costly than in a rural setting where many people can camp out).

Jerry Mintz was ambivalent about participating in an NCACS conference. He told the Board that NCACS' lack of motivation to expand and lead the alternative school movement in the United States is hindering the expansion of alternative education nationally. He said that if NCACS ceased to exist, a new dynamic coalition could and would emerge, but that as long as NCACS remains, it is unlikely that someone or some group would organize to promote the changes that need to be made nationally because doing so would be divisive to NCACS and alternative schooling in general.

I had also lost interest in NCACS in recent years. The organization has been floundering since 1989 or 1990. There appears to be no long range vision of where NCACS wants to be in five or ten years or how to get there. Instead there has been considerable drift. Worst of all, there did not seem to be any concern among the Board that things were not going well. When I joined NCACS at its peak a decade ago, the organization was dynamic and growing, with a vision to lead the nation toward the countless alternative education possibilities. Today, there is no director; the annual budget is less than $30,000.

NCACS underwent a civil war that began in 1988 or 1989. The details of this conflict are murky so I will not try to analyze them here. But I was shocked and saddened that a coalition whose members pride themselves on their excellent conflict resolution skills failed miserably over several years to work this problem out. The scars remain.

At the conference, I urged the coalition to brainstorm to substantially increase and diversify funding so that membership fees can be reduced and a full-time director hired.

I spoke to Jerry some more on the return trip. He said the NCACS by-laws need to be revised so as to make them more inviting to non-members and former members. In fact, at the conference, it was noted that when the by-laws were last revised some years ago, the updated version (current) by-laws were never published.

The failure to publish the by-laws is symptomatic of what occurs to organizations without a director. I am also on the board of directors of the statewide (New York) Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC). CEC is well-established, has 9000 members, an annual budget of more than $300,000 and a strong board, but unlike NCACS, a strong director. An organization or coalition with a great director is vastly preferable and much more effective at reaching its goals than one without any director. I was pleased that at this year's NCACS conference, the Board had finally accepted the fact that NCACS needs revitalization and renewal.

Jerry agreed with me that the NCACS newsletter is a quick-read and could be a much more valuable publication. Unfortunately, the Board voted this year to reduce the newsletter's publication to three issues per year from the previous four. There will be no summer issue this year.

The annual meeting was very disappointing to me. Only 35 persons attended. As recently as two years ago (in Colorado), nearly everyone attending the conference was present for the membership meeting (although many of the kids drifted away during a long debate on a proposal to amend the by-laws). The meeting was also rushed, squeezed between other pressing (more important?) events. When the membership voted to approve a resolution in support of Puerto Rican POWs, only one person had a written copy of the text of the resolution being voted on. This should never occur. The exact language of the resolution is vitally important and members should not vote on issues, and especially those of such a controversial nature, without a copy to study.

Although no one voted against the resolution, six or seven members abstained. It was not good that debate was limited by a lack of time, nor that no one asked the abstainers why they refused to vote yes. Adhering to good procedure was lacking at the annual meeting.

Despite my criticisms of NCACS, the organization has tremendous potential and many, many dedicated, beautiful people and schools in it.

From AERO: the Hadera Democratic Schools Conference

An account of the Fourth International Conference of Democratic Schools held in April, 1997 at the Democratic School of Hadera in Israel (See also Albert Lamb's letter below enclosing an article by David Gribble describing the school):

A Dramatic Time in Israel
by Jerry Mintz

We went to Israel on April 11th for the Hadera Conference, the Fourth International Conference of Democratic Schools. It was a very dramatic time. Some participants had canceled because of the suicide bombs of previous weeks. As I arrived at my relatives' house two days before the conference, all eyes were glued to the TV news as missiles were hitting Northern Israel, and Israel was counter-attacking by trying to pinpoint Hezbollah positions in Lebanon.

That night as I tried to sleep off the jet lag I was awakened by a "Boom, boom" in the distance. It grew louder. I went upstairs where my cousin was watching TV. Three years ago I remember her as a school-girl who played good tennis for her team. Now, at 19, she trains Israeli boys for the army and was home for the weekend.

"BOOM!" It was getting closer. "What is that?'" I asked her. Rolling the letter R she responded, "Ghrain." "What?" I asked. "Ghrain. It is ghraining. It is a thunder storm!" I wasn't expecting a thunder storm in Israel.

While in Israel I rode public buses five times, sometimes scanning the passengers to look for overdressed, wild-eyed men. But the Israelis themselves seemed to be used to this sort of tension. In fact, after the conference we went on a bus tour around Israel, and of course, they went NORTH! I asked if that wasn't dangerous and they said, "We know the range of the missiles. We won't go within their range!" Yet on Independence Day, with fireworks displays in the distance in every direction, I was at a multi-family bon-fire/barbecue. They had the bon-fire because they felt it was dangerous to take their families where there were crowds. One of the families had come down from the north after a missile had come within a kilometer of their house. After they left, one had come within 50 yards. "I'm so glad we left," the father said to me. "The kids would never recover from such a trauma as a bomb falling nearby."

The conference itself began on April 14th, ran to the 19th, and it had its own share of drama and excitement. There were hundreds of participants, and over 125 from out of Israel. About half of those were there through connections with AERO. Many of the participants were children.

The AERO-connected attendees included Liz Wertheim of Hawaii, Jim Hoeppner of the Alternative School in Calgary Canada, with a group of about ten from his school, Oleg Belen of the Stork Family School in the Ukraine, later joined by a graduate, George, who is studying in Israel, Jim Murphy of West Side Alternative School in New York and a group of ten, Patrice Creve with two others from Theleme School in France, Stan Kantner, who now directs Clonlara's Compuhigh from Israel, David Gribble, Sean Bellamy and seven others from Sands School, in England, Justin Baron of Summerhill, Barry Lamb, who is trying to start a school in Australia, and Fred Bay of the Bay-Paul Foundation in New York, with whom I flew over.

In addition there were participants from Hungary, Germany, Austria,Denmark, and many Israeli Schools. The Ministry of Education was a sponsor of the conference and will reimburse Hadera for many of the expenses. They are encouraging the development of more democratic schools. The Minister, Amnon Rubinstein, was scheduled to speak, as was Leah Rabin, but they were forced to cancel because of the crisis in the north. I had hoped to ask Rubenstein why homeschooling is illegal in Israel. I think it is an issue they must deal with.

We were housed at a conference center called Givat Haviva, which is run by a kibbutz specializing in Israeli-Arab relations. The food included wonderful fresh fruits and vegetables. The mornings were spent at the Democratic School of Hadera, a public alternative school which organized the conference. The students there had voted to cancel classes for the week so they could participate in the conference. The k-12 school is run by a democratic parliament and has non-compulsory class attendance. Yacov Hecht is the director. There are 300 students in the school, with 3000 on the waiting list!

Many of the workshops dealt with various aspects of democratic education such as the role of the adult, the decision-making process, "When Ideology Meets Reality," etc. I think it was difficult for students to participate in these.

One of the workshops I did was on table tennis, but I was disappointed that it was not until the next to last day of the conference that they got a table. People sometimes do not understand why I consider it so important to have a ping pong table. I did a workshop on this last year in Russia which I called "Ping Pong and Pedagogy." Here are two reasons: at a conference such as this one it presents an opportunity for people of a variety of ages and languages to take part in a common activity. Second, it is non-academic. But because my teacher was perhaps the best in the United States, I can show people how to improve their game spectacularly in a brief time span. Through this process students can learn that they are quick learners, and thus gain confidence in themselves as learners. After the table appeared, it became very popular. I was able to teach about twenty-five people. The school will keep the table.

There were also presentations by schools. Two of the most dramatic were by a democratic school on the Golan Heights, which is fighting for full approval by the Ministry of Education, and a democratic school in Bethlehem in the West Bank, the Hope Flowers School.

The latter presentation was by its director, Hussein Issa, a Moslem Arab, who had barely received a 12-hour pass to come over to make his presentation. As he said, "It is sometimes harder to fight for peace than for war." He lost his mother and son in the process. The school is co-educational, and has Jewish volunteers who teach music and Hebrew. His school makes a variety of crafts to support itself, and he is looking for places in which they can market their wares.

PO Box 732, Bethlehem, West Bank, Via Israel.

Two unusual homeschool groups came over from Austria. One is a circus family, which supports itself by performances of unicycles and juggling, including spectacular flaming torches, which they demonstrated for us. Another group I had met at last year's Vienna conference. Fourteen of them, with children as young as 7, DROVE to Israel in two vehicles, through Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan! It took them ten days and many bribes at the borders. I negotiated with a ferry company to reduce their price in hopes that the family's trip back could be expedited by a ride to Greece. The two groups were planning to visit the West Bank school on the day I left Israel.

There was general agreement to create a computer network centered around democratic education, and to keep in touch electronically.

We plan to meet for chat sessions on Puget Sound Community Schools VEE. Send me e-mail at jmintz@acl.nyit.edu if you would like to join us. To get to the VEE, telnet moo.speakeasy.org 7777. PSCS usually has a meeting at 8:30 PM Pacific Time on Wednesdays.

We have about 5 hours of video shot in Israel. Let us know if you want the edited version for AERO's usual $25.

Also from Jerry via AERO:

Growing Without Schooling Conference in Boston, Mass.:

The GWS thing was very good, seven hundred people, and Gatto was great again, of course. I did a discussion on homeschooling around the world and there were people from Education Otherwise England and Japan. Day ([Farenga] heard from people that it was great. Then I did one at the end with the teenaged kids to demonstrate democracy--through which we set up a new organization of and by homeschool kids, called LOYO, Learn on Your Own.

From Mary, the Berkshire Live-Out:. Ashfield, Mass.:

...About forty people came all told, from all over, and the sense of love and sharing and mutual learning was wonderful! Mostly homeschooling parents, but also a couple of schools like East Hill in Vermont—Laura and Jon Bliss and their two kids. We all carried on non-stop dialogue for five days straight, enjoying every minute of it!

The "kids' community" was great! Jerry Mintz was wonderful with all of them, as always, and He has a way of teaching the littlest ones ping pong that is absolutely magical! From Jon and Laura Bliss, East Hill School in Andover, VT came this note:

Dear Mary, Ellen, Larry, Chris, Betsy, Nancy, Connie, Frank, Dave, Cathryn and others too numerous to name—

Our time at the Live-out was real time ... real, authentic stuff happening, not just another "week-end" conference where everyone takes time out from life's crap; but an honest-to-God slice of community struggle.

Three specific thanks:

1. To Mary, for being Mary, speaking truth to power—wherever and however that power shows itself;
2. to the "second generation," who are willing to be brothers and sisters in the struggle;
3. God, who gave us sunny skies, breezes, bugs and witches' caves.

> "... No Heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take Heaven."
>
> —Fra Giovanni

Love, Jon and Laura

Here follows a photo montage of scenes from the Live-out, starting with Jon and Laura Bliss:

Two group shots, the lower one visiting my son Tom's new greenhouse-based sewage treatment plant:

And from the children's community:

Madison Harrison on flute - and busy learning ping pong from miracle coach Jerry Mintz, who watches benevolently.

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SCHOOLS & SCHOOL PEOPLE:

From Albert Lamb:

Archiving Democratic Schools:
Hadera, Kilquhanity
by Albert Lamb

Albert Lamb, a Summerhill graduate and, like all Summerhill graduates I've met, a great believer in democratic education, lives with his wife Popsy, also a Summerhill graduate, in a cottage known as The Bungalow of (to me) astounding antiquity and charm, in a village known as Chalford Vale, in the Cotswolds of Gloucestershire, England. For many years Albert was the editor of the **Summerhill Trust Journal**. *He also published a new edition of A.S. Neill's writings called* **Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood, by A. S. Neill** *(St. Martin's Press, NY, 1993), which Summerhillians say is more truly representative of Neill's beliefs than the earlier edition by Simon & Schuster. He now works for an archiving organization, as he explains below:*

Dear Mary,

I promised you some information about the world's largest democratic school, The Hadera School, and about the Hadera Conferences which have been being held since 1993. But before going into that I thought I'd tell you a bit about the P.E.T.T. Archive and Study Centre, where I've been working for the last fourteen months. Its connection to democratic schools might be of interest to your readers.

Craig Fees, our archivist, who has been the guiding force in setting up the Archive, has written a description of what goes on here which I will quote:

> The Planned Environment Therapy Trust is a small charity, founded in 1966, devoted to what might broadly be termed a therapeutic community approach to living and working with difficult people and people with difficulties—emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children, people with mental health problems, delinquent individuals, and so on. Despite what turns out to be a deep and broad history, this way of working often appears to be a recent invention, and in 1989 the Trust decided to found an Archive and Study Centre to hold records related to

this kind of work, and to facilitate research, debate, and understanding generally.

Both the democratic school movement and the therapeutic community movement were inspired by the American Homer Lane and his Little Commonwealth here in England in the early part of the century. His was the seminal experiment in democratic community living and its effects on children. Homer Lane was concerned with troubled children but A.S. Neill applied these ideas to kids who had no special problems and he had similarly spectacular results at his school Summerhill. That is how the P.E.T.T. Archive came to create a collection of papers related to democratic schools. These schools can be looked upon as therapeutic communities for healthy children. From almost the start there was some material at the Archive related to my old school Summerhill. Last year I came on board to look after the various collections relating to democratic and progressive education. We are now becoming the world's first Archive with a broad concern for preserving a record of what has gone on in these democratic schools. During the course of 1996 we decided to set up a web-site, and to create a presence for the Trust and the Centre on the Internet.

Our address on the web: http://www.pettarchiv.org.uk

My Trust address is:

Albert Lamb, Planned Environment Therapy Trust, Archive and Study Centre, Church Lane, Toddington, Cheltenham, Glos GL54 5DQ, U.K.

So far everything is going very slowly in cyberspace but in time we hope to provide a useful tool for anyone wishing to understand the free school and democratic school movement.

Now on to the Hadera School and the conferences that bear its name. Most of this was written by ~~David~~ Gribble who recently visited the archive and gave us copies of all the Hadera Conference Journals that have been published so far. David worked at the Kilquhanity House School in the far distant past and for many years at the Dartington Hall School. When Dartington closed he was one of the three people who started the Sands School. He has just recently got back to England after touring the world looking at alternative schools, schools his wife calls "real schools," and he has already finished a book about his experiences which is to come out in the fall. Here is what he wrote in the Hadera Conference Journal about the first Hadera conference in Israel:

The Democratic School of Hadera, Israel
(mostly) by David Gribble

At the beginning of June (1993) the Democratic School of Hadera hosted a two-day conference of democratic schools, after which visiting members of the conference were invited to spend a few days visiting the school itself. Apart form the staff of Hadera, those present were Dan Greenberg of Sudbury Valley School in the United States, Lotte Kreissler from the Freie Gesamtschule in Vienna, Lois Holzman from the Barbara Taylor School in New York, Sybilla Higgs, Kate Marmot, May Fitzpatrick, Rowan Hart-Williams and David Gribble from Sands School in England and Jerry Mintz from the AERO Alternative Schools Network. The conference was led by Yakov Hecht of Hadera.

We are all co-educational schools where students and adults are on equal and friendly terms. At all our schools most decisions (or all decisions) are shared, with students and staff having one vote each. This entails various degrees of freedom in the different schools, but certainly in all of them the students have much more freedom than they would do in conventional education. A shared objective is that our students should be given the opportunity to become happy, self-confident people who are concerned for the welfare of others and are aware of their own responsibilities. The belief that this can best be achieved by creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between people of different ages is probably the most important thing we have in common. Beyond that there are many differences.

Summerhill is a boarding school. Hadera has over three hundred students, and is supported by the state. Up to the age of eight you have a wide choice of activities, but no lessons. Sudbury Valley has no timetable for students of any age: if you want a lesson you have to set it up for yourself. Staff have to re-apply for their jobs every year, and they are elected or rejected by the students. Sands relies on common sense rather than rules, and has no system of punishment. The teachers and students do the cleaning, cooking and gardening. Barbara Taylor is in a tough, deprived, inner-city area. It charges minimal fees (or no fees? I am not sure of this). The Freie Gesamtschule is free in the extra sense that it itself is flexible, both because of its small size, and because it is neither based on preconceived theory nor bound by tradition.

The schools also differ in the ages they cater for and the numbers in the different age-groups. Sudbury Valley, for example, has students from the age of four to over twenty, whereas Sands goes only from eleven to eighteen: Hadera has over three hundred students, and the Freie Gesamtschule has fifteen. Most of the Sudbury students are in the upper age-ranges, whereas Hadera's school population is evenly spaced. Such differences are clearly significant.

The second Democratic Schools Conference took place in 1994 at Sands School in Devon. There were more young people at this one and more educators, although it was mostly the same schools that were represented. The third conference was held in Sands again and the fourth one, in April of 1995. In 1996 there was the largest conference yet, sponsored in Israel by the Hadera School and the Israeli Ministry of Education. A hundred or more people spent almost a week together in meetings and workshops, sharing experiences from their schools in the Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, England, Canada and the USA. The 1997 Hadera Conference is scheduled to take place in June in England, sponsored by the Sands School. This one is to be run as a kind of week-long summer camp.

To conclude I will pass along some information about one of the great success stories in the alternative school movement. I see many parallels with Summerhill, except that the Summerhill community is one-eighth the size of Hadera so that things tend to go on in a less formal, more unstructured way. The following description of the Democratic School of Hadera is taken from a booklet handed out to all those who attended the first conference.

> The Democratic School of Hadera was founded in 1987 by a group of parents and educators who worked for two years towards its establishment. The school is located on a hill-top eucalyptus forest, surrounded by citrus groves and fields, in Kfar Brandeis, the southernmost part of Hadera. There are 350 students from ages one upwards attending the school. The school includes a nursery, a kindergarten, elementary and high school levels and an institute for training teachers.
>
> The school has taken on the task of applying democratic principles to its educational framework, using democracy as a tool to reach the goal of respecting individual rights within a social framework.

In practice The Democratic School has four democratic "authorities"; legislative, judicial, executive and comptrolling. The legislative authority of the school is called "The Parliament". Its members consist of all the students, their parents and the school staff. The parliament meets once a week and is run by a chairman who is elected once every three months. Any member of Parliament can bring an issue to the floor for discussion.

The parliamentary meetings determine all school rules, ranging from playground rules to rules governing the acceptance of teachers and students to the school, as well as the allocation of the school budget.

The Judicial Authority of the Democratic School consists of two committees: the Discipline Committee and the Appeals Committee. Students and teachers are elected to these committees by parliamentary vote and act as judges. Any person in the school can "sue," prosecute and be prosecuted using the Discipline Committee. The Executive Authority of the school consists of members of the committees elected through general elections which are held once a year. The school Comptroller and the Comptrolling Committee's role is to oversee the function of the executive Authority. Investigations can be initiated by the comptroller or result from a formal complaint.

During his/her time at the Democratic School the student works with the following question: "What am I going to do with the time at my disposal?" Learning at the Democratic School is based upon self-motivation, personal responsibility and personal initiative. A student is free to plan how to make use of the time he/she has at school with the aid of four main trends of study:

1. Lesson Scheduling:

At the beginning of each year an academic schedule is publicised incorporating a wide variety of subjects of study. During the first month of studies, students can audit a course to see if it suits them, and from their observations, build a lesson schedule that meets their needs. There are no required subjects at the school, and all lessons are taught under the concept of multi-age, meaning the lessons are open to all regardless of age. Each lesson has its own ground-rules (determined by the teacher) and by choosing the course, the student is obliged to abide by those rules.

2. Personal Agreements: A student who does not wish to study within the framework of a classroom can always arrange an independent lesson with a teacher by means of a personal agreement. This agreement covers conditions of length of study, frequency of meetings, the student's obligations, the teacher's responsibilities, etc.

3. Study Centres: The Democratic School has several study centres where students may concentrate on their studies.

4. Learning Centres: The school has the following learning centres: Hebrew, math, art, music, theatre and literary studies.

Notes on an English Democratic School: Kilquhanity

by Albert Lamb

I made my first trip up to Kilquhanity House in Scotland in July a week before it closed its doors on a summer term for the last time. I have been hearing about Killy for 35 years, since my early days as a pupil at Summerhill. John Aitkenhead was inspired by Neill and visited Summerhill before starting Kilquhanity in 1940. John and his wife Morag established a meeting system like Summerhill's that they called Council and though they have always had some compulsory lessons, the school has been very free.

John Aitkenhead decided last autumn to close Kilquhanity after receiving a government inspector's report requiring the school to make expensive changes and to alter the curriculum. John has not been very well recently, he is, after all, 87 years old and the prospect of a principled fight with the authorities must have seemed a daunting prospect.

Even though Kilquhanity was about to close there was no feeling of tragedy about the place. The plan is for the whole staff group and all of the children to move on and start a new school in new grounds, to be called the Galloway Small School. The current headmaster, Richard Jones, and his wife Vivian, two long term members of the Kilquhanity staff, have led the effort to set up a new school.

I was struck with the great beauty of the grounds, the old manor house and the extensive farm buildings with a long view of a distant hillside, dotted with sheep. You couldn't ask for a prettier school. There are plans for the old place to be used for some new purpose. For the moment John and Morag will continue to live in the big house but I fear it will be a lonely time for them as there is nothing quite as empty as an old school when the kids are gone.

From our Readers:

I have a thick stack of wonderful responses to earlier questionnaires which I promise to print in the next issue, but there really isn't space in this one for them, so this issue will focus on schools—existing ones, new ones and proposals for new ones!

Amy Cooke, Venice Community School:

Amy Cooke
31191 Road 180, Visalia, CA 93292
Dear Mary et al,

My greatest concern re alternative ed is the degree to which interpersonal issues come up and the ways in which they get handled; and I'm ***not*** talking about kids!! Alt. Ed. has the capacity for deep interpersonal and personal healing and transformation—but only if people can face the issues with compassion and dedication (as Scott Peck says, so wonderfully).

Certainly ***nothing* has shown me my own issues so clearly as the last twelve months at VCS, made especially painful by how unprepared we all were. Perhaps there's no way to prepare?**

I would like to hear the issues of problem resolution, conflict, inner healing, group healing, etc., discussed more as *adults'* **experience in alternative schools. These may be the reasons why so many schools blow up—as ours came so close to doing. Are there schools whose focus is the** *whole* **family?**

I am exploring Josette and Sambhava Luvmour's *Natural Learning Rhythms* as one way to bring in families in a healing way.

By the way, guess what? Joseph Chilton Pearce is coming in December to do a fundraiser for us!!! I met him at the Home Education Conference in Sacramento. So, we are moving along. My gratitude to you all knows no bounds. *Every* issue of JFL and *ΣΚΟΛΕ* speaks to me powerfully.

With love,
Amy

From Larry Welshon (via e-mail):

Alpine Valley School:
(from the brochure)

> ***Children do not need to be made to learn, told what to learn, or shown how. If we give them access to enough of the world, including our own lives and work in the world, they will see clearly what things are truly important to us and to others, and they will make for themselves a better path into that world than we could make for them.***
>
> *—John Holt*

This quote from John Holt clearly states the principle upon which Alpine Valley School is founded. It is the objective of the founders of this school to provide a place where students between the ages of 5 and 19 can do what they do naturally - *learn*. The purpose of this brochure is to describe the environment which will be created at the Alpine Valley School.

The structure of Alpine Valley School is patterned after the Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts, which has successfully educated children for 28 years. The following description mirrors many of the activities which have been witnessed first-hand at Sudbury Valley School. (For those who are interested, we can provide information about Sudbury Valley School and the experiences of their students after graduation.)

Life at Alpine Valley School

When students arrive at Alpine Valley School they will not be given a class schedule, list of course requirements, or any other form of assignment. Students will, instead, be welcomed warmly by other students and staff, shown around the facilities, and told that they may do whatever they are interested in doing. Students will discover that this is how every day, from the first day through graduation, is structured.

All activities at Alpine Valley School will be initiated and pursued by individual students based on their own interests and desires. Each student chooses whether to play, converse, become active in school administration, or engage in any other activity that is not life-threatening or illegal. Students may participate in several activities for a day, a week, a month, a year or more. It is the student's choice. The students make their own decisions.

> "I didn't really go to school in the morning thinking that I'd go there to learn. I woke up in the morning and said, I'm going to school and I'm living life.... All my learning came about without really having it set up. It sort of unfolded."
> —From a student at Sudbury Valley School quoted in *Kingdom of Childhood*

At Alpine Valley School the students will find a wealth of resources, the most important of which is time. Time to think, create, investigate, socialize, reflect, practice—in short, to pursue their lives. Staff of Alpine Valley School serve as role models and tools for finding answers, rather than the source of answers. Through interacting with people of all ages, interests, aptitudes, and abilities, each student discovers what incredible resources other people can be.

The decisions of individual students are fully respected. The staff does not make decisions for the students; the children recognize early that they are responsible for the consequences of their actions. Children are allowed to experience both success and failure. Through this they develop the ability to make decisions. Alpine Valley School is a place where children have a rich environment in which to grow and develop into self-reliant and responsible citizens ready to meet the challenges of their future.

Decisions and Discipline at Alpine Valley School

Along with the advantages of living in this community comes the responsibility of governing the Alpine Valley School. As with most communities, members create the rules regarding the operation of the community, define the limits of acceptable behavior, and guide the mediation of disputes. This has proved to be a powerful experience at schools like ours.

School Meeting

The primary decision-making body of the school is the School Meeting, patterned after the New England town meetings, the very roots of American society. The School Meeting is comprised of all students and staff, each of whom has a single vote. Everyone has the opportunity to be involved in making decisions that affect the school.

Assembly

The Assembly is the policy-making body of the school. All parents, students, and staff members make up this group. They deal with policy matters, setting the budget, and electing officers of the school.

Judicial Committee

Everyone is encouraged to resolve his or her own conflicts. However, for situations in which that does not work or where rules need to be interpreted, Alpine Valley School has a judicial process. When a student or staff member is charged with violating a school rule, he or she may be asked to appear before the Judicial Committee. This group of students and staff together investigate the situation to seek out justice and resolve conflicts quickly and fairly.

> Albert Einstein likens the child to a plant, saying "*... this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty.*"

Life After Alpine Valley School

Parents are naturally concerned about their child's future and how it will unfold after formal schooling. It takes an enormous commitment of faith and trust to allow children the freedom needed to become fulfilled adults. The types of jobs in which graduates of Sudbury Valley School engage are as diverse as the students who have attended. Having had the years to perfect their own innate talents, to overcome their weaknesses and to hone their ambitions, students are in a position to go out into the world happy and productive.

Colleges and Universities Grant Degrees to SVS Graduates

After leaving Sudbury Valley School, graduates go on to careers with and without further schooling. Those students selecting more schooling are accepted into and graduate from colleges and universities including, Ivy League schools, state colleges, and local community colleges. These have included Harvard University, Yale University, Boston University, Columbia University, University of Colorado, University of Denver (from *Legacy of Trust: Life After the Sudbury Valley School Experience)*

The Founders of Alpine Valley School

Work on Alpine Valley School began as the desire of two parents wanting a school for their newly born son where he would be free to grow and develop unfettered by others' conception of what he should be or could be. People joined in this pursuit and after a while, a group of people began to meet and work out the details of starting a school.

We continue to spread the word about the Alpine Valley School and the founder's group grows and strengthens. To contact the parents who believe as we believe is our biggest challenge. You may hold the answer to finding these parents! You may be parents yourselves who want this. If you like what you have read here, get involved. Call us at 237-2872.

Books Available about Sudbury Valley School:

Free At Last
The Sudbury School Experience
And Now For Something Completely Different
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J AV S

Vol. 1 No. 1

(The Journal of the Alpine Valley School)

Inaugural Edition, January 1995

Dear Friend,

We thought it would be useful to send out something like this periodically. The intent is to foster an open forum for the sharing of ideas, questions, responses, ramblings, etc. related to the Alpine Valley School. Right now the audience includes the people on the mailing list. This will, no doubt be expanded. If you would like to include something, or if you have a comment on this issue please send them to our PO Box 140275, Edgewater, CO 80214.

Sincerely,
Karen, Larry, and Jessica

Fish Analogy....

by Lawrence A. Welshon

One spring day it dawned on me why children in coercive schools are often panicked, violent, frenzied, and out of control. This awareness happened when I saw an aquarium three-quarters empty. Consider the following:

Freedom is to children as water is to fish.

When an aquarium is initially set up, it is filled to the top with water. The fish eagerly explore, frolic, eat, and play. As time goes by the aquarium is ignored. The water level declines—imperceptibly at first—and only a few fathom the impending doom. When the water evaporates to such a level that the fish can no longer ignore the lack of depth, they get panicked and lash out.

When a child is placed in a coercive factory school, the evaporation of freedom begins. Children enter school eager to explore, frolic, eat and play. Over the course of their "education" the children begin to panic as they witness the violation of their inalienable rights. The initial evaporation is imperceptible to most children. The few thrash out and are dealt with severely and immediately. Today, we drug those children who know of, and react to the tyranny. By the ninth year of schooling, many children have realized the loss of freedom. Like fish who are panicked when three-quarters of their water is evaporated, our children panic. Children lash out at the impending final evaporation—they engage in "rebellious behavior". The rebellious behavior seen in all levels of school today is a product of the factory school where lip service is paid to freedom and responsibility. I do not believe that most children are mean and spiteful. The system designed to educate them instead strips from them their autonomy and self-reliance and helps turn them mean and spiteful.

For me, Alpine Valley School is an expression of my love and commitment to Ethan and his future.

Truth ...

by Karen Wood

If the Alpine Valley School does not stand for an intimate and intense search for truth, it stands for nothing. To allow for each individual to seek that truth in unique and creative ways does not change the existence of a truth worth seeking for. We cannot ask the question, "What is truth?" like Pilate did as he sent Jesus to be crucified, thus washing his hands of the responsibility to choose between good and evil and placing everything in a valueless mass of gray. Truth impacts each one of us individually, so we each shine with an aspect, like sparkling facets of a diamond. But, as in the story of the blind men and the elephant, even though they all had laid hold of a different part of the elephant, and thus described it differently, there still was an elephant to explore. They were not creating an elephant. They were discovering it. Truth exists. My job is to pursue it with my entire being. Not frenetically, but passionately.

To Be or not to Do.....

by Jessica Werner

I've been thinking a lot lately about a realization I had a few years ago when I lost my job suddenly and was forced to move in with my parents. After I had been living there for a month without a job, it started to look like every conversation I engaged in revolved around the question, "So what are you doing now?" I had no answer because, clearly, I wasn't *doing* anything. The more this question was asked, the more I felt like a failure. One night in frustration I told my Dad that the next person to ask me what I was doing would get punched. My Dad pointed out that there was nothing wrong with their question, I just needed to find comfort in my answer.

So I spent the next few hours contemplating not being able to identify with a "do"ing. I finally realized, I'm not what I do, I'm who I am. If a person really were what they do, my Dad would have wings (he's a pilot). We identify a person by her job, her education and her social class. Honestly, have you ever heard anyone answer the question, "So what do you do?" with "Well, I wash my dishes, laugh at stupid jokes, talk on the phone..."

In working with Alpine Valley School I've begun to realize how many children must feel like failures in the regular school system. It doesn't matter how truly intelligent a child is, or how much effort and commitment they put into their activities at home. If a child doesn't *do his homework* or *sit still,* he's a bad student and must be dealt with accordingly.

My commitment to the school is compelled by the idea that I can help create an environment where students won't benefit as much by just "doing" as from being interested and engaged in learning what comes to them inspired and natural. I think about my activity in getting the school to open in September as an example of this. By living in the school paradigm, I will naturally be inspired to do activity that will generate the school's existence. So I am.

Today I was reminded of the principle of "do-gooders" doing for others as they know best. I live in the same house as three felines, one of whom is called Winston. As I walked to the kitchen to refill my coffee cup, I saw a particularly nice sunny spot on the carpet. Thinking this spot perfect for a cat's nap, I proceeded toward a reclined Winston to place him in this choice spot.

At a very deep level I immediately realized that I was engaging in a quintessential "do" gooder's" action—exercising my better judgment over an autonomous being. Winston returned to his previous spot.

Publicly-funded Alternative Programs:

From David Bly:

Northfield Alternative Learning Center
Northfield, MN
(from the brochure)

An Individualized High School Educational Experience
offered by the Northfield Public Schools
David Bly and Karen Pownell Lead Teachers
City Hall Building, 801 Washington Street, Northfield, MN 55057
507-645-3061 (Tel.); 507-645-3025 (Fax)

The Northfield Alternative Learning Center Mission:

The Northfield Alternative Learning Center is a program of students, educators, families and community that strives to create an environment where students can:

- realize their potential,
- become healthy contributing individuals in a rapidly changing society,
- participate to the best of their abilities in a lifelong learning process through a challenging, innovative and encouraging community-connected approach:
  - affirming individual worth
  - accommodating individual learning styles
  - maintaining a small student/teacher ratio
  - utilizing state of the art technology
  - developing a teacher-guided curriculum based on emergent, independent and self-directed learning which leads to graduation and commencement of the pursuit of the student's vision for life

NALC Students

Students attending the Northfield Alternative Learning Center are ages 16-21 and have chosen the ALC to meet or supplement their goal to earn a high school diploma. In addition they may also be attending Northfield High School or any approved State Post Secondary Program .

Program Structure

A full-time NALC student must enroll in a minimum of six credits per year. This schedule may include five independent study classes and participation at an approved work site, but might also include involvement in Mainstreet Mentoring or other approved programs. For each independent study class the student meets with a teacher in a small group (3-8 students) for about two hours weekly. To earn full credit, in addition to the class time, students must satisfactorily complete 4-5 hours of homework a week for each class. To earn full credit at the work site a student must be successfully working a minimum of twelve hours a week.

A student may not enroll in more than seven NALC class credits per quarter and must maintain a high level of success in order to continue with that credit load.

Students may be dropped from their NALC classes for lack of attendance or inability to keep up with their assignments.

As students will earn a Northfield High School Diploma the credits earned at the NALC must meet with the approval of the Northfield High School Principal.

What Students say:

"I know I get a fair chance at an education here. The outcome of my education depends on what I do. If I don't get things done I can't blame anyone else. My teachers work with me. I can have input on what I'm learning." "I learned more here than at other schools." "Teachers are great. They really care."

Course Offerings:

ALC students can earn credit in the following classes: English, Social Studies, Math, Science, Work Experience, Parenting & Effective Living Skills, Physical Education, Health and a variety of other electives.

Child Care:

The NALC provides free child care Monday thru Thursday A.M. and Monday evening for those students who need it.

Referrals: Students aged 16- 21 are eligible to enroll in the ALC, provided they meet the Graduation Incentives criteria. Northfield residents may contact a High School Counselor or the Assistant Principal and request an interview with the NALC Lead Teacher. Students from another school district should call for an appointment to meet with the ALC teacher to determine eligibility and placement. Students should bring copies of their transcripts to this appointment.

Orientation: After enrolling, students will attend an orientation session, where they will learn more about the NALC, complete registration forms, get a class schedule and get their first assignments. Students should bring something to write with, copies of their work schedules, a transcript, and a $15.00 book deposit.

Homeschoolers:

From Linda Dobson,via e-mail:

Linda lives in the Adirondacks and writes a Newswatch column for the Hegeners' Home Education Magazine. *She's also just finished writing a new book on homeschooling—her second—and is waiting for it to be published:*

...my eldest ... just got done putting together a resume for another potential job he was asked to apply for. What a resumé—I lived through it all with him yet the scope of it really hit home when I imagined one of his government-schooled peers turning in a resumé alongside. Likely the gov-schooled kid could have included a couple of cashier jobs and the receipt of a piece of paper two months ago. Chuck, whose imagination was captured by volunteer firefighting when 14, got the opportunity to do it. This evolved into an additional interest of the rescue aspect and training as a First Responder, then as an EMT-D. Couple months after training was offered a job as EMT-D at Olympic Arena. Now offered job as ambulance personnel part-time, maintaining part-time status at Olympic Arena, thus the resumé. (He's certified in interior attack and continues as an active firefighter.)

In spare time he's executive committee member of First Responders Emergency Medical Services Ass'n., volunteering for the High Peaks EMS Task Force helping with office work and databases, and goes back to the nature center where he started volunteering and leading trail walks at the age of 14 whenever he can.

He's been a cashier at a department store, an assistant manager of a small gift shop, and counselor/life guard at Boy Scout camp. He was recently asked to run for election to our Town Board.

He's not quite 19. I smile when I think of comparing his home-school experience with what a school experience would have been. I smile because I'm so gosh darn happy for him and I wish nothing less for *all* this world's children—whatta wonderful world it would be...

My daughter, 16, is ready to cut loose and is in process of considering options. Would love a short-term apprenticeship that allowed her to live somewhere *far* away (not quite sure if that means New Hampshire or Tibet!), so if you hear of anything let me know.

Didn't mean to *talk* your ear off, but I love sharing with you and it's been a long time since I've had the time for anything close to a meaningful correspondence. If book comes through, the time will become short again.

All best,
Linda

Privately-funded Alternative Schools:

From Claudia Berman, via e-mail:

School Around Us, Kennebunk, Maine

I have been working on finishing my summer programs and starting School Around Us for the Fall. The SAU has been experiencing some growing pains and has also had a low enrollment crunch. This may sound contradictory but we have been working hard to update and organize the school's policies and procedures. The Board of Trustees has been very active in this process. It has taken four years of a combined effort to collect, type, print and try to follow all the various policies and procedures that have been developed over the last 28 years. We needed to do this to be able to bring new folks into the school and give them some base from which to work. This year we are opening with 10 full time students and 3 part time. We are hoping for an increase back to 25-35 studnets (which is our capacity) in the next few years. The opening of school was rough. Now that it is open, I am going throught a pile on my desk.

So to answer your questions on the back, I am continuing to work to promote holistic education. I am part of a wonderful community of people here in Kennebunk who are dedicated to the values and beliefs of holistic education and freedaom in education. School Around Us has made many shifts over the years but remains true to its holistic nature. *ΣΚΟΛΕ* is an important document and I encourage you and commend you. I wish I had time to write for you but I am simply at my limit of time and energy with running SAU and Days Meadow Science Center. So keep up the good work.

John Potter's New School of Northern Virginia:

(Mission statement, from their web page) :

The mission of The New School is to imbue each student with a passion for learning through our philosophy of integrative education. I started The New School in 1989 to offer Northern Virginia students an inspiring learning environment and a community experience that was small, safe and personal. In doing so, I believed I would help students discover an authentic passion for learning.

My experience at The New School has borne this out. Many of our arriving students who had performed well above average in traditional settings had not developed intrinsic motivation. Most felt that they had lost it along the way. We have demonstrated that when these students are noticed and respected as academic colleagues by the school and the teachers, when their voices are heard, their senses opened and their uniqueness celebrated, they develop their sense of real ownership.

We use the word "ownership" a lot at The New School. I see it developing when a student takes an active role in shaping his or her academic life and begins to set high standards for his or her own work. I see it when a student continues to refine and improve a product beyond the expectations of a course. I see it happening when a student begins to objectively, reasonably and persuasively negotiate academic and other issues with his or her teachers and other students.

For all the staff at The New School this mission is crucial. We share a passionate, optimistic, stubborn belief, born of experience, that this place works wonders for those who want to roll up their sleeves and invest in themselves and their school community.

From Bizy Kubala and Lisa Corum Fox:

Window on the Trees—A new school in Austin, Texas:

The Vision Our school places primary importance on **community building and strengthening skills for** strong working relationships with self, family, classmates, society, culture and the natural world. We see this school as a place for all ages to grow wise in relationships. We believe that when adults and children are in a healthy emotional place and supported by a caring community, new learning and skills are easily absorbed. We are hiring a consultant who has tremendous experience in working with children and adults to create an atmosphere of safety for emotional and social development. Parents will be responsible for creating and sustaining the structure that will provide the children with other learning experiences that are relevant to their lives.

A Typical Week We envision a four-day school week: two days in the classroom and two days in the city, at libraries, museums, parks, and on field trips and outreach projects.

Our **country classroom is a 16 x 18 back porch surrounded** by trees, at the home of one of our families. The home is on 24 acres of land shared between a community of four families, a 25 minute drive from downtown Austin (We will certainly carpool), with opportunities for gardening, animal care and outdoor play space.

Each week is structured around a theme or project and integrates academic learning into day-to-day activities:

Monday: INFORMATION DAY Children meet at the library and find information related to the theme or project. They plan menus for the week, make a grocery list and do shopping. If materials are needed, they shop for those. There is time for a picnic and play and perhaps an extra class (gymnastics, music, sign language...).

Tuesday: PREPARATION DAY Children study and share their library gleanings, and prepare for the field trip. Some prepare lunch. There will be time for outside play, gardening and animal chores, journaling, stories, and clean-up at the end of the day

Wednesday: TRIP DAY We meet in town and ride the bus, if possible, to the field trip location. Children ask questions, conduct interviews, take pictures, sketch, take notes, etc. Afterwards, a picnic and play time.

Thursday: REFLECTION AND RESPONSE DAY In some manner, which varies from week to week and child to child, the children work out their response to what they have seen and prepare to share it at the family dinner. Some prepare lunch. The children run and participate in their weekly student meeting. There is time for outside play, gardening and animal chores, stories, etc., and clean up at the end of the day.

Thursday evening Parents, consultant, children and supporters gather to share the evening meal. Children make their presentations and everyone cleans up. Children go off to play with paid or volunteer help while the parents and consultant have their weekly meeting.

Leadership Structure: We envision a family-run school with family units willing to invest significant time and energy in building and sustaining the community. Committed parents helped by both the consultant and the children will run the school, each individual discovering and working where he or she feels the greatest call to contribute. All parents and the teacher will be required to participate by listening and sharing in the weekly school meeting. Meetings will be conducted using the following ground rules:

- Respect for each person of each age is the starting place.
- All opinions are listened to and valued.
- Everyone speaks once before anyone speaks twice.
- Everyone speaks without interruption.

Our Consultant: Deborah Way has been working with families and children of all ages for years. Currently she is director and teacher at St James Episcopal School, a school for low income children. Deborah was instrumental in starting the school and has been with it since before its inception. She is Montessori trained and has worked as a teacher, leads family workshops and play days in the RC Community and educates leaders within the community on family issues. She is the founder of The International Association of Childcare Workers, an organization dedicated to supporting childcare workers around the world.

Investments: This education requires a substantial investment from all who are involved, parents as well as children. Our hope is that the fruits and flowers of our funds and labor will produce dividends and benefits worth every bit of our effort. The investments we see at this time for each family are as follows:

- One to two days per week with the class
- A minimum of two hours each week outside the classroom preparing material, arranging for field trips, etc.
- One evening per week to attend family dinner and parent/teacher meeting
- $100/month for consultant's salary
- $30-$40/month to pay for materials, food, gas, utility bills, admission fees, bus fares, etc.
- A commitment to maintaining constructive relationships with others in the community.
- Participation in regular work days.

These investments are based on a school size of six students.

For this first year, we are seeking to build a community of six families, one part-time consultant, and many volunteers and supporters. If you think you might be interested in joining and participating in this community, plan to send at least one adult family member to each of three meetings designed to give us a feel for the different aspects of the work we will be doing together.

Meeting #1 will be for adults only. We will each prepare ahead of time for this meeting by writing our responses to some questions. During the meeting we will share our written responses with the group and listen to others' responses following the ground rules outlined above.

Meeting #2 will be a work day. Some of us will work on glassing in the back porch that will be our classroom. Others will organize activities for the children. Others will make materials for the school. Others will cook. Any suggestions for other work projects are welcome.

Meeting #3 will be a play day. Deborah will guide us in allowing the children to direct their play while we participate wholeheartedly. She will give us information beforehand to help us prepare for this meeting, and during the course of the play day will help both children and parents to understand feelings and resolve conflicts in affirming ways.

After our third meeting, those of us still interested will continue to meet for work and play throughout the summer. We anticipate formally opening the school on September 15, 1997.

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INTERVIEW WITH JON SCOTT

ex-Chair, Dept. of Atmospheric Sciences,
State U. of NY at Albany and
Stelton Modern School graduate

by Chris Mercogliano, Larry Becker and Mary Leue

Jon on his birthday, waiting for cake!

C We want to get you to begin at the beginning. So maybe you could give us some background on the modern school movement, on what a modern school was and how it got started.

J. Well, the Modern School Movement started with Francisco Ferrer, who was a martyred Spanish educator and possibly an anarchist at the turn of the century who decided to establish schools in Spain which would teach everybody. The literacy rate in Spain was maybe about 35 or 30%, very low. The schools then were church schools and only men were admitted. Women were allowed to become nuns and things like that. He believed that everybody should learn to read and write, and be responsible citizens. The schools then were church schools to become monks or nuns. He started these schools whose basic principle was that of Friedrich Froebel—the kindergarten, which was not pre-first grade but school was all ages. The idea was freedom, that the students had choice in what they studied and how they studied it. Most of the time they spent doing, rather than with the 3 Rs. The king didn't like this kind of school. The unions were starting to get organized at that time, and unions backed the school, so the king cooked up some excuse that Ferrer was going to assassinate him and they executed him with a firing squad. The famous line that we all learned from Ferrer was something like this: "Shoot very well, my young friends, I will not blame you. Long live the modern school!" When Mary was giving her speech about the Free School at our reunion, one of the students who had been in the Spanish school, the *escuela moderna*, got up and said, "Long live the modern school!" I don't know if you remember that.

M. No, I didn't. Oh, wow.

J. Well, with that as background, after his execution, schools were starting all over the world, a large number in the US. The one I eventually went to began in New York City around 1907, something like that . It lasted there for several years, but the parents wanted a self-contained community, so they bought this farm in Stelton, New Jersey, not too far from New Brunswick, and set up the community there and built a school after a few years. They had the farm building which they used as a dormitory for students to come from the city to stay and go to school. It was called the living house. Quite a few famous people were teachers at the school. Most of them didn't last; they had their own ideas and really didn't believe in this concept of freedom. My father, for example, was a teacher there. He didn't really want to be there but he was asked to do it when the principal left. I don't think he really had that flavor even though he was a Thoreauvian anarchist. But he had also been a professor and once you have been a professor and you go through our school system, you sort of get adapted to it.

M. We had the same experience at the Free School. None of us had been through a free school ourselves. It's a paradox, but it's true. You have to learn yourself.

J. Yes, you have to learn something new. And there were professors who came and took the job but they didn't last for more than few months. My father was one of them.

L. What kept them from lasting? Was it the students that kept them from lasting?

J. They believed more in teaching than in learning, in the idea of choice, that the students control the destiny of the program, that the student is the curriculum, so to speak.

Well, I think it was around the First World War that they moved to Stelton. The school flourished in the 20s, that was the highest level it got to be, around 60 students; that was the maximum. Most of the students were those who moved into the community with their parents, altough quite a good number, especially at the beginning, lived in the dormitory. The history of the teachers is quite varied. When I was there Alexis Ferm was the principal. Elizabeth Ferm was getting in poor heath at the time, so except for visits to our houses and so on we didn't see much of her. We called them Uncle and Auntie. We never used their names.

Two other very important figures were Jim and Nelly Dick, who started the school in England. At the time, the war was coming on and Nelly said, "You will be drafted if we stay here." It was mandatory at the time, and so they decided to go to the US where they wouldn't be citizens so they couldn't be drafted; so they left. I think they had been associated with two schools in England.

M. Modern schools?

J. Nelly started a modern school. Jim started a school very much like it, although it wasn't a modern school.

M. What was the name of it?

J. I don't remember; something like the Liverpool School.

M. And Nelly was his mother?

J. Nelly was Jim's wife. And she was Jim's mother. Young Jim was the Dicks' son,

C. Jim the father and Jim the son.

J. Yeah. Big Jim and little Jim. Little Jim went to the school. I would say he finished by the time I got there. The Dicks ran The Living House while the Ferms were there. The Dicks were a little bit more for teaching, for encouraging the students to do reading and writing, although not forcing them. Jim himself didn't learn to read until he was around nine, like most of the children. If you're not forced to learn how to read, you don't do it, because there's no need for it. I was ready to read when I was around nine and a half. Of course I wanted to read the comic books. What else about the school?

M. I'm thinking of some of the other people who were at the school at the time. Norman Rockwell?

J. Rockwell Kent. Rockwell Kent was an artist.

M. Will Durant?

J. Will Durant was, I believe, the third teacher. When the school was in New York it was small. There were fourteen or fifteen students, so the teacher was everything. There was only one teacher. There were several very interesting teachers. Will Durant is the most famous.

M. He fell in love with Ariel, who was a student?

J. He fell in love with Ida Kaufman, whom he called Ariel. She later changed it to Ariel—Ariel in Midsummer Night's Dream—she was fourteen. His background was that he had a bachelor's degree from a Catholic school in New Jersey. I just read their joint autobiography. He tells the story, then she tells the story. You should read it, it's wonderful. He kind of believed in the school but never could talk himself into becoming an anarchist. He was more of a socialist. He was a great speaker, a great debater. The Modern School was associated with the labor unions, and debates of all kinds were the "in" thing to do at the time. He was in great demand as a debater.

M. Rockwell Kent was also a radical, I remember.

J. I don't know much about him. As a matter of fact, at our next reunion a student who is doing a PhD on radical or activist artists of the 1930's is going to speak about them. Rockwell Kent was a bit earlier.

M. I had a volume of the collected plays of Shakespeare illustrated by Rockwell Kent that I got in college during the 30's. It got lost during one of our moves.

J. Yes, he was an illustrator. He did the illustration on the cover of Avrich's book, the man with the dog. And there was Man Ray, who was a well-known artist. A couple of the teachers were artists, such as Carl Zigrosser,[1] who was an engraver and a printer. He was a teacher for two years. And there were others.

M. What about the one who was associated with Frank Lloyd Wright?

J. Edgar Taffel? Edgar Taffel was a student at the Modern School and when he was about fifteen, he left and went to high school and then started college and just couldn't see his way any way in college. He was kind of lost, a good student but didn't believe in what he was doing.

C. That happened to me too.

J. Yeah, I understand the feeling well. But Edgar learned that Frank Lloyd Wright was looking for apprentices and applied. He went through the apprentice program, and did some nice things. He was in charge of the Johnson Wax building and Falling Waters. When Frank Lloyd Wright wasn't there he was in charge of the building. He was one of Wright's main disciples. He did a building in Columbia-Greene County and he did the whole campus in Fulton-Montgomery. Quite nice, very interesting. It's somewhere between Amsterdam and Gloversville.

M. Who was it—who took the primary leadership in the decision to move to Stelton?

J. If you've read Paul Avrich's book, there were two leaders. Joseph Cohen was one of them. Somebody Abbott was another. I think it was Joseph Cohen who said, "This is not right. We've got to go and start a community and build a community around the school." Anarchists came from all over. Not just anarchists —activists, radicals. Emma Goldman was one of the patrons of the school when it started in New York. She was an "undesirable," so they shipped her back to Russia. She was one of the instigators to getting the school in addition to the other three.

M. We're very interested in what you remember. You say that some people loved the school and supported the school, but couldn't go so far as to become anarchists. What would be the sticking point? What would be the difference between a person who is drawn to the system and a person who says, "I am an anarchist." What is it about?

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[1] "Carl Zigrosser was a printer and teacher at the MS before I got there and was responsible for some of the nice linoleum cuts used in the Modern School pamphlets. He encouraged Hugo Gellert (a well known artist) to do some of them."

J. I have no idea.

M. Would they be willing to picket during a labor strike—in other words, is it activism?

J. Well, I can give you the example of my parents. My father was a professor at a small college in Kansas, Hayes State. He was blackballed from teaching at universities because he taught free love—he taught a civics class in which he allowed the discussion of these topics—but the main one was evolution, which got him fired. But those two topics, free love and evolution, among others. This was a couple of years after the Scopes Trial. So I have articles, "Scopes Trial Revisited," all about my father and why he was fired. The president of the university was a Southern Methodist and very, very serious about it. So, my dad went to California, taught in schools there, and I guess he was teaching Social Studies in Pasadena. He was canned from there, too, for his views. He had been a socialist and I think at the time he was probably a socialist. But then he joined the labor movement—he was a Wobbly. That's what attracted him to Stelton. He was almost murdered working on the Southern Pacific Railroad because he was a union leader, trying to organize the railroad. They gave him all the dirty jobs, so they got him to clean out an oil tanker. You had to go in there with soap and water and clean it out. One of the company people closed the top on him. He must have banged it loud enough so some of the workers heard him and got him out.

M. Boy!

J. The anarchists were a big part of the labor fights at that time. They were serious. There were lots of people killed.

M. Was your father married to your mother at that time?

J. Yes, when they went to the school. They met at a Modern School in Mohegan, a very similar school, which I believe was run by the Ferms. A real nice place near Peekskill, right on a lake. It was a beautiful community. I don't know why my mother went down there. She was teaching in a one-room school and had heard about the Ferms. So, she went to visit the school and met my father there. I guess they stayed for a year and then came back up to Columbia County to live a Thoreauvian existence. They became Thoreauvian anarchists. I was born there.

L. So you have citizenship in Thoreauvia.

J. Right! We owned the land until a little while ago when we sold it. We lived in a hut and grew vegetables and had a pig and some chickens and a spring. We canned the vegetables. The only thing they bought from the neighbors was milk, I guess, although they did have a goat at one time. I guess they wanted to get back into a more intellectual milieu. So when the Ferms decided to move to Stelton, they decided to go to Stelton. This was in 1934. The Ferms left Mohegan for Stelton in the twenties.

M. Why did they leave Mohegan?

J. Because they asked them to do Stelton because Stelton was bigger. They wanted the Ferms down there.

C. What was it like being a boy growing up in Stelton?

J. I was two. My first recollection of Stelton is that I was underneath the table in the art room, drawing pictures while kids were fighting all around me. Every now and then they'd have a big fight. Everybody would decide to fight and the teachers would allow the fighting until it stopped. That was the principle. Then they would start reasoning, "Well, what did this accomplish?" But I didn't want any part of the fighting because I was the littlest kid there! So I went under the table and continued doing my work.

So what did I do? Well, the school had an art room, a weaving room, a kindergarten, which had blocks. There were books. Some of the students remember that the books were banished, but that's not true. There was a big wall of books in the weaving room. You could take them out, read them, look at the pictures and do anything you want with it. But I didn't. Once in a while, I would. Once a day, a teacher would come in and read children's stories. For a long time, I participated in that. But in addition to those three rooms, there was a nice stage and an auditorium where they held meetings and we did plays. It was a very nice school. There was a ceramics shop, a printing shop and a wood shop. There were all kinds of fields, athletic fields. Baseball and football, but there was never a basketball hoop. Baseball was the big thing at the Modern School. I think it was Jim Dick. I was told he was a big cricket fan, but there was one of the teachers that loved baseball and would organize baseball all the time. My father would do hikes and nature walks, and my mother was an art teacher. But my father wasn't on the staff for very long. His field was economics and he wanted to get out a newspaper. It was called "Money." It printed very unusual ideas about money systems and things like that. He had a circulation of about 20,000, so that kept him busy.

M. Where did he do it? In New York?

J. He got the paper out in New York and of course, he did a lot of writing in Stelton. He was a great gardener. He had four acres of garden. Huge strawberry plants—we'd pick strawberries and sell them to the local people. He'd have the kids pick the strawberries—my sister and I and our friends—and he'd give us half.

M. Was he a Henry George man?

J. No, Uncle Ferm was. My father was more into things like social credit. The idea of balancing the money supply with the goods, so that you don't have inflations. I spent a lot of time in the wood shop; most of the time, I think I spent in sports and games. We played most of the time, which is what we should do. That's where you learn. You learn by playing. We played games, all kinds of competitive games. Competition was fun, in addition to all the sports. Basketball we didn't do. When I got to be around twelve, I insisted that we put up a basketball hoop. I don't know why. We didn't have one, so they showed me how to do it and we put one up. I practiced and practiced at the basketball court. But nobody wanted to play. Hardly anybody wanted to play, they wanted to play the other things. There were a lot of interesting games.

The school was on a brook which was a great laboratory. They had built a dam for a swimming pool and we could go in the brook and catch fish. This is during school hours. We'd sell the fish—they were suckers, not the best eating fish in the world—but we'd sell them for five cents to the people walking by. We always caught more than we sold. They were real easy to catch. You could catch them with your hands.

We did our own printing. I learned how to set type before I could read. I would dictate poems to the older students and they would write it down and then I published them.

C. Was anybody concerned that you got to be nine years old and hadn't yet learned to read?

J. Nobody important was concerned about my lack of reading. I was concerned about it when I wanted to read the comic books. My sister wasn't interested in the comic books, I guess. She learned to read after me. I think it was my instigation. She was a year and a half older than me and still didn't read, but of course, as soon as she learned to read, she was into everything. She was reading all of the classics and I started to read the young classics, like *Tom Sawyer* and *Mysterious Stranger* and things like that. But I read all the Oz books—I loved the intrigue of them. There were about ten of them and I got through them in about two years.

Things like *Story of a Bad Boy* by Thomas Aldrich. It was a great book. *King Arthur* and that kind of thing I read right away.
M. So how did you learn?
J. My mother was the reading teacher and I said to her, "I want to learn how to read." She said, "All right, here's the poetry book. Read this poem." I said, "I don't know how to read that poem!" She says, "You read it and start here and you read that poem until you know it." The poem was, "Poor Robin."

M & J (in unison): The north wind shall blow
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor robin do then, poor thing?

He'll hide in the barn
And keep himself warm
And tuck his head under his wing, poor thing.

J. So I learned that. She started pointing out, well, now you see, you know these. Of course, I already knew the poem, that's why she put me on that poem. She knew I knew it. So I started connecting the words and then the next poem and then five, six poems later, I was pretty good.
M. So, she didn't do phonics with you, she did whole words.
J. That's it—recognizing the word in print.
M. But connecting it up with something you already knew.
J. Right. And when you are nine, how long does that take? No time.
M. That's marvelous. It's kind of like decoding. My younger brother was a decoder in World War II and you learn certain words. It's like the Rosetta Stone—you can then figure out the others. So that's like a detective method.
J. Right. I could read the road signs, of course, and cereal boxes—there were key words on the cereal boxes.
M. How come you hadn't done that on your own beforehand, do you know? That's how my kids learned to read. They never learned in school. They'd pick things up and ask, "What does that say?" and then they'd know.
J. I think because it wasn't encouraged at all. There were so many other things to do. I was never encouraged to read. I think that was one of the criticisms that many of the students, or at least the parents had of the school. "Why don't they encourage you to read?"
M. Well, I don't agree with that. I don't think kids need it.

J. I don't either.

M. Our kids would ask the question. It's clear you didn't ask the question, that you had other things on your mind. If you'd asked them, they would've told you. Is that right?

J. Absolutely. Some students wanted to learn earlier, I think because their parents said, "You tell Joanne you want to learn how to read." So they did and they learned how to read, but it didn't do them any good.

M. The Waldorf schools don't believe that children should start to read until they are nine. And they won't let teachers teach them.

J. Well, I don't know whether I agree with that, but I think it's about the right age.

M. I don't either. It seems to me there ought not to be a theory about it. If a kid wants to read, let him learn.

J. Yes. My mother learned to read when she was three-and-a-half, but they lived on a farm. They were out alone and there was not that much to do and there was no school and she learned how to read. She wanted to and she did. Maybe her mother encouraged her to do that, I don't know. It's quite possible, but if you told me, "Jon, I think you should learn how to read," I would say something in Italian! I had no interest in it at all. And the same thing with numbers. We learned numbers. You learned numbers playing games. We played Hangman and I played Hangman spelling words before I knew how to read, so I could spell some words. We hardly ever had complicated words—they were names and things like that. So, I would play that game. I played Monopoly. Monopoly was a no-no in that community, of course. So, we'd sneak away from school and sit there all day and play. Some games would go two, three days!

M. The school's ideology was not about reading, it was about economics!

J. No, they knew we were doing it and it was no big deal. They weren't going to tell us not to. Gardening. I forgot to mention the gardens. I spent a lot of time in the gardens in the summer. We each had our own plot. We'd grow our own stuff. But I spent a lot of time on the brook, in the winter and the summer. Swimming, building boats, building toy boats, sail boats, making little dams. Oh, we loved to make dams![2]

M. I lived on a hill and when it would rain, it would run down in this deep gutter and we would rush out, my two younger brothers and me, and we'd build dams. And we'd get them to run into the road and stuff like that.

J. Right. That's what we'd do. Then we'd make a little hole in the dam and it would go.

M. That's childhood, real childhood.

J. You can't do that when you're going to school sitting in a classroom. You can't do those interesting things. And sled riding. We had to be at the school at nine in the morning for assembly. We sang the songs that we called the Modern School songs, some of them written by students, some of them written by teachers, but most of them were the ordinary songs that everybody sings.[3] Then there were announcements and then we were free to do anything we wanted. So if I had a project in mind building a dam, I took off for that. Or if I had a project building a boat, I did that. I never became a real good carpenter, but some of the students did. I was just a little too lazy to become good at it, as these guys know. We had to be there in the evening to clean up the room.

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[2] *In answer to a question about whether he might write something for ΣΚΟΛΕ on education, Jon responded (via e-mail):*

"I had some thoughts about the idea of allowing the students to go out in the community and how Ambrose Brook played a major role in my education. This weekend I took a bunch of pictures of this muddy little stream which flowed right near my house and next to the school.

One day I traveled home on an iceberg in the Spring thaw, and I took this "road" regularly by sled when the stream was ice-covered."

[3] In answer to a question about what songs the school sang, Jon wrote us:

"I only remember "Greensleaves", "Down by the Sally Gardens" and stuff like that. We did Shakespeare plays and sang those songs. We had lots of songs written by teachers or students and many from the regular literature that we sang every day. Most were kind of children songs, songs about nature and such."

Every student, sometimes two or three students to a room, were assigned to clean up the room. If you made a mess, you were supposed to clean it up, but then we came in and swept it and whatever else we needed to do.

M. Was this after supper?

J. Three o'clock. Once school closed.

M. So you were not, by A. S. Neill's definition and maybe Dan Greenburg's definition at Sudbury Valley School, really a democratic school. Any more than we are.

J. From that point of view, the point of view that we had to do two things, you are right.

M. Hallelujah!

J. We also had to put the tools away. Alexis Ferm, Uncle, was very, very particular about that. There was a painting of the square and you had to put the right square on the right painting! Everything had to be put away exactly by three o'clock. So, from that point of view, no. From the point of view of cleaning up the school and keeping it in order and being there twice a day, it was undemocratic, so to speak.

L. Was this a boarding school for some of the kids?

J. Yes. When I was there, there were very few. As a matter of fact, it was only in the summer time that there were boarding school kids.

M. How many kids were there all together?

J. When I left, there were only about twelve. But when I started, it was forty, forty-five.

M. So, what was the timing? Was it starving Depression days? What led to the decline in numbers?

J. The students were to a large extent children of people that came over from Eastern Europe, Soviet, Ukraine, Kiev. I remember a lot of them came from that area. They were Russian Jewish anarchists. A lot of them were not necessarily anarchists, but heard about the school and came and got employment. The school was associated with sewing shops and small factories. So they worked there and they sent their children to school. So they were very recent immigrants. I would say fifty, maybe even more than fifty percent, were those kind of students. They grew up and they took off. The parents still owned the houses, the parents got older, they left. So the school had no recruitment.

M. I see. Kind of like the Shakers.

J. Right. So, it wasn't like Sudbury, which is a school saying that here we have a school and we are going to be here forever. This wasn't that way at all. I think there were a lot of people who wanted to keep the school going but there just wasn't the population. There was no room in that community for any more people.

M. Had the Ferms gone by this time?

J. Auntie died before I left. She died when she was in her eighties, probably in the early 1940's. We left in 1946, my parents and I and my sister. There was still a school for another seven years, but it was smaller and smaller. It got down to about six or seven students.

M. Was Uncle still active?

J. Uncle left before the school closed, a few years after we did. He moved to Fairhope, Alabama, where there was some sort of single-tax community. He participated in that, built his own house down there. He died when he was something like one hundred and two years old. He was a health-conscious person, so you can see why he lived that long. Never smoked, never drank—well, maybe a little wine once in a while. Very healthy diet, almost never ate meat or eggs. Cheese was OK, cheese and vegetable and bread. The Ferms had run a school in Brooklyn before they moved to Stelton and I think that's how the Stelton people found out about them. They knew that they had this idea of freedom in education. They sort of talked the Ferms into coming. They were very reluctant at first because they liked what they were doing in Brooklyn.

C. Where did you go to school after you left Stelton?

J. After I left Stelton, we moved back to our land in Taconic, the land of Thoreauvia, although the other two cottages we had there were pretty deteriorated. But my uncle Bill Wheeler and his wife had built a house on our land. We sold them four acres of our land, so we moved into that house, and enlarged it and fixed it up a little. They moved to California. Incidentally, Bill Wheeler was a member of the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish War. They have an annual reunion in New York. He's pretty much of a communist, he was not an anarchist at all. So he was on the communist side of that War. The anarchists and communists were sort of together trying to fight the fascists.

C. When you moved back, did you end up in public school?

J. I went to the Roeliff Jansen Central School in Hillsdale, New York.[4] It was twelve grades in one fairly small building. Typical class size was between thirty and sixty. Being born in the Depression years, my class size was thirty-two. So it was fairly nice in that respect.

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[4] "Roeliff Jansen is the central school I attended in the late 1940's (1946-1950). It was my first public school. It was

C. How was the transition for you?

J. In the Modern School, the students could request classes. I requested a class in algebra and three other students attended and we did algebra for one hour, three days a week. We did the whole book in about six months. You don't really need to take a lot of time. My sister and others requested a Spanish class, and so my mother sort of coerced me into going to that and I went to the Spanish class, which she taught. So I had that. I did not know how to write script very well. I figured you'd have to take notes and I was getting kind of panicky a couple of weeks before school started in 1946. I told my mother, "What am I going to do? I have to take a test and I can't write!" She said, "Here, here's the script book. Learn how to do it." So what did it take me? One week and I was into it. You should see some of the letters I got from Uncle Ferm. He must have gone through some school like that because he had absolutely perfect handwriting. One hundred years old and it's perfect! I couldn't do that in a million years. So, the transition was tough from the social point of view. I could not believe how cruel people were.

M. Yes. That's what a lot of kids have found. My son Mark was absolutely daunted by that.

J. Why did the children have to be so nasty and form these cliques and if you're not in one of these cliques, you are the dredge of the world? So, I didn't get into those cliques because I wasn't there for very long, so that part hurt. I was still good at sports and I joined all the sports teams and I played pretty well at sports. The transition academically was a joke. I knew more than all those kids already, just from studying on my own and reading books and things like that. I knew some of things in the English book since I had already read them. I already had the equivalent of a year of algebra and here I have to take algebra! I tell my students, "What do you think I got on the first algebra test?" They had a test every week and that was the very first test I ever took in my life. Of course I got a hundred on it. The next one, I got a hundred, and

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in Hillsdale, NY and my senior graduating class size was 32. The building is now the offices for Taconic Hills School District."

about seven, eight weeks went by and the teacher announced, "Why can't you all do like Jon?!" After that, I did not get a hundred any more! So I started missing one or two every now and then purposely. But I asked the teacher, " Why do I have to take this? I know this stuff, I can do it anyway. I don't have any problem with it." He said, " Oh, you can use the practice. And it's required by law. You have to take this." So, I took it.

M. You go along to get along.

J. The model of "one size fits all" doesn't work. So, our school system stinks, to be honest with you. I saw that by the time they got to the ninth grade; most of the students were not interested in learning. They had no desire to learn. And I still did. So, I did really well in school. That was typical of most of the kids from the Modern School. They became very, very successful in high school and when they went to New Brunswick High, chances are that the valedictorian of the class came from the Modern School. I would say that most of them were that simply because they were not brain-dead yet.

M. My son Mark became the valedictorian when he graduated. He had had one year in middle school and said, "I can't stand it, I'm going to start my own high school." He got together with a few kids that had been in our school and some of their friends. They found themselves a principal, they advertised for teachers and other students, and they had a little high school ready for the next fall. I helped credentialize them with State Ed. It was no problem. It ran for five years and he was credentialized for a diploma by the Milne School, the SUNYA Lab School. He became the valedictorian. He got up there, in front of everybody, and he looked around and he said, "I have nothing to say." I thought, "Oh, my God!" I wanted my son to shine. He wasn't interested; he really didn't have anything to say.

J. (laughing) I think that's a great story!

M. If he weren't my kid, I would too (laughing)! He belonged to himself.

C. So, Jon, where did you go from there?

J. Then I went to Cornell in the ag school. I wanted to be an engineer, but we couldn't afford the regular school, so I applied to the forestry school and the ag school. I decided to go to the ag school and majored in biochemistry because I was very interested in chemistry in high school. I was fascinated by the possibilities. I had a chemistry set when I was at the Modern School. My parents bought me a chemistry set.

M. Did you make bombs?

J. Oh, I made all kinds of bombs! Did I make bombs! I never made a rocket, but I sent away for chemicals and a new book that you could do different experiments. But I'd go to school a few days after I got that set and I'd spend two weeks with that thing. That's what you need to do. Spend all day doing it. Intensively. That's what learning is about. Learning is not sitting in a classroom listening to some joker talk. Some joker like me. So, biochemistry and I minored in soil. It was the Korean War at the time, so I took a test to be a draft dodger and passed the test. You needed a 70% and anybody who was twelve years old or greater at the Modern School could've passed that test. Over seventy, you didn't have to get into the draft if you were in college.

M. They wanted the people who had been systematically excluded from learning for the grunts—the cannon fodder.

J. But if there was anybody who got into Cornell that flunked that test, I would really be surprised. It was not much of a test. So, I stayed in the Rotsee (ROTC) program. It was mandatory for two years, but I stayed in it for the second two years because it paid money, number one. $35 dollars a month. I was poor. I was an assistant cook at a fraternity house which required about five, six hours a day, because I had to be there at five in the morning. Then I had to be there at lunch and I had to be there in the evening. It paid $15 dollars a month plus your meals. Then I did odd jobs, but I actually wound up making money. I paid all my tuition and my room and board and I had money to spare. My parents couldn't afford it anyway. My father was getting out this newspaper which wasn't making any money and that and their little farm was their only source of income. So they really couldn't afford to send me to school. The fees at Cornell were $35 a year—it was a total state school at that time.

M. Not all of it. Engineering was not. Billy, my oldest son, started in engineering. But then he changed achools, telling us, " I don't want to be a slave in order to pay for this engineering."

J. Right. That was $350 per semester, so $700 a year as opposed to $35. One I could afford, the other I couldn't. I loved the ag school. It is not really an ag school, it's bird watching and botany, all of the plant physiology, the soils, all the interesting stuff I wanted to do was in that school with some exceptions. Zoölogy was in the arts and chemistry, but I could take the courses that I needed to take for my major. I could take up to fifty-five credits. Bacteriology was in the ag school. It had great programs.

M. My daughter, Ellen, majored in horticulture in the ag school there.

J. I didn't miss a thing from the arts and science program. I graduated in 1954 and I went to Lackland Air Base. I got commissioned at graduation, so I'm a lieutenant now. I went through flying school at Columbus, Mississippi, Mission, Texas and St. Angelo, Texas in multi-engines. From there, I went to a radar school. To be a full-time pilot, you had to sign-up for another three years in the Air Force. My contract was for three years. I said I didn't want to go for six years, so I decided not to do that. But I got flying jobs anyway. I got stationed in Alaska, flew DC 3s or C47s all around Alaska. Alaska was my second-to-last choice, but I was sure glad I went there. What a nice place! Lovely place!

I'm glad I didn't go to Korea which was one of the choices, or Japan or Germany. I probably would have enjoyed that too, but Alaska was a wonderful place. Got out of there and I decided to go to graduate school, but the timing wasn't right, so I took a trip to Europe. Hitch-hiked all around Europe. I decided I wanted to go to the University of Munich to continue biochemistry. I got thinking about it and I really didn't want to do biochemistry. I wanted to do something outside. So, I came back and I worked for about seven months at a food company—General Foods Research Laboratory, in Tarrytown, New York. From there, I decided to go to graduate school in meteorology in Wisconsin. Madison was just starting a program in meteorology. I got through there in 1963 and I've been at Albany ever since. My field had sort of switched from biochemistry to bio-climatology. Also, I have done a lot of work in research on lakes and oceans. My thesis was on the energy of ice-covered lakes in Wisconsin—there's a lot of those. I visited a good number of them. It was a comparison of the energy balance of the lakes. It was a project dealing with natural indicators of climate. The vegetation, anything physical like a lake, would summarize the climate and it was an interesting project. I have been doing things like that ever since.

C. So, eventually, the boy who learned to read when he was nine-and-a half became the chairman of the Atmospheric Sciences Research Department at the State University of New York?

J. Not on my own volition. I fought it very, very hard to not be the chair because I didn't like administration. But, nobody would do it, so I took the job. Some departments, there are people who want to be chair, and in our department, they wanted to be chair, but nobody wanted them to be. So, that's how I got stuck with the job. They trusted me. At least I wouldn't butcher the job, so to speak.

C. So, what are you doing now?

J. I signed up to be chair for one semester, saying that at the end of the semester, we have to decide who is going to be chair because I don't want to do it any more.

M. But you looked around and there was nobody behind you.

J. I got stuck for six years. I retired as chair. It was the only way I could get rid of the job.

C. But you are still teaching?

J. Yeah, I'm teaching. Last year, I taught too much. I taught a large class which I called Oceanus in Gaia. It's a fun class to teach. But teaching a large number of freshman who are disinterested at the University is not too much fun. One third of the students are great, the other two thirds —ech. I didn't even care if they showed up.

M. They're not really in a position to learn all that well because they have been through our miserable school system.

J. I know. They really are not inclined academically. They are there because their parents tell them they have to be there and they have to get a degree in order to get a job and dadadadada. It's nonsense. It's not a good system at all. It works for about a third of the students. Actually, it probably works for two-thirds. The way I look at it is one-third of our students, and in some places it is a higher percentage, just shouldn't be there. They have no interest whatsoever. One third of the students don't belong there because they should be some place better. They should be doing their own thing. They are not going to get much from what we do.

M. Because of the big classes?

J. No, because they're capable of doing it on their own. What they really should be doing is the college equivalent of the Modern School or the [Albany] Free School. That's what they should be doing. Encouraged to do their own thing, to learn. For that middle third, the system works. They don't have enough whatever it takes, self motivation, to do it on their own and they're hard workers; they've got the work ethic, and they get by. They'll never become Einsteins. Most of the top third, the ones that could do it by themselves, won't become Einsteins because we talk them out of it. We tell them what they should know instead of having them find out what they should know.

M. Do you think that it would be different if they were going to Princeton?

J. No, Princeton does about the same as we do. But, better students. Probably the top fifty percent are the ones I am talking about at Albany that shouldn't be going to classes and writing notes. They should be encouraged to do their own thing. There's a very few that get into Princeton that can't get something out of it. But we get about a third. They just don't belong there. We have too many colleges. I probably shouldn't be saying this. If George Pataki[5] hears this...

M. Well, we'll all go together when we go.

J. And I'm doing Project Renaissance. This is an interdisciplinary course which is quite fun. Interdisciplinary faculty—three graduate students, three faculty. When I retired, I said to the dean, "I'd like to do teaching for three years just to keep in it a little bit." So he said, "Yeah, OK, do Project Renaissance." They were having a lot of trouble getting people to do this because it's a lot of work. Working with a team is always more difficult than just doing it by yourself. It takes a lot more time. But, it worked; I think it worked fairly well. The problem is, I cannot convince my two faculty peers that the students should have some choice. That's the hard part for me. I like in my own upper division and graduate classes, of course; I give them the choice—they're capable and they can do it. It's a little harder with freshman—you have the triage, the three parts, and only that middle third benefits from the kind of teaching we do. It won't hurt the top third, but it just won't do them any good. They're just kind of paddling with the stream.

C. It's just beautiful to see you embody the whole principle and the story.

M. It's perfect. It's wonderful. Thanks so much, Jon.

C. We appreciate it.

J. You're welcome.

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[5] The present governor of New York State.

I hope that after reading our interview with Jon Scott above, you will be as eager as I was to meet this marvelous couple everyone at Jon's Stelton School knew as "Uncle" and "Auntie." Alexis Ferm's loving account of his wife's life below not only tells us a lot about her but gives us also a real insight into the sort of human being her biographer/husband was as well! We will be serializing Elizabeth's educational writings, taken from her book, Freedom in Education, *chapter by chapter in* ΣΚΟΛΕ. *As I said above in my Editorial Comment, this dedicated teacher embodies the kind of "holistic" approach to teaching and learning we've all been struggling to express fully, in ways that short-change neither the specific nor the general—in other words, NEITHER real children and real teachers NOR the kinds of educational principles teachers need to aim toward embodying in their teaching. It is my belief that Ferm does this better than anyone else I've read—EVEN our well-loved John Gatto! More than that I cannot say.*

ELIZABETH BYRNE FERM—1857-1944

A Biographical Note By Alexis C. Ferm

Galva, Illinois was a pioneer town in 1857 when Elizabeth Byrne Ferm (Mary Elizabeth Byrne) was born there on December 9th. Her brother was the second child born in the settlement. Her father had gone there before his wife in order to prepare a living place of some kind, as he expected to go into farming on a large scale. When his young wife arrived and saw the hut that he had built for her, she sat down on the step and vowed that she would not live in such a place. But John Byrne simply said, "Well, if you want to sit out there tonight to meet the bears maybe you'll make their acquaintance." When the gloaming came, she decided that she did not want to get acquainted with the bears.

When Elizabeth was about six years of age, her father suddenly died, and her mother returned to her grandmother's home in Montreal. She remembered that there was a war on but she did not know at the time what it was about. She recalled being on the street in Montreal when the news came that President Lincoln had been shot and that she ran in to tell her mother about it. Elizabeth received her first schooling in some small private schools and then in the French Convent in Lachine. Her schooling included piano lessons, the practice of which she pursued assiduously for many years. The piano seems to have been her one delight at that time,

Elizabeth Byrne Ferm, from the frontispiece of her book, Freedom in Education and she finally studied with Laval, a famous pianist and composer.

When she was about twenty she married Martin Battle, somewhat older than herself, and they came to New York to open a bookstore on Third Avenue, near Bloomingdale's drygoods store. Evidently she had a mind of her own and they did not agree about the conduct of the store. After a few years she decided she had made a mistake, and took to teaching and living with some friends, but continued studying the piano at the New York Conservatory of Music, from which she was graduated on June 13, 1885.

In the early days of Henry George's Anti-Poverty Society Elizabeth joined the movement and her certificate shows that she became a member on May 16, 1887. She was active also in the Woman's Suffrage Movement and went to the convention in Washington as a delegate when Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were the leaders.

Her mother, having moved from Montreal to Brooklyn to be near her daughter, took up her home with Elizabeth. Shortly afterwards Elizabeth's sister came to Brooklyn for special medical care and nursing. She brought her very young son and daughter with her. The sister died after many months of lingering illness, during which time Elizabeth acted as nurse. Instead of sending the children back to their father in Montreal, Elizabeth decided to mother them. To do the job properly she resolved to take a course in child education. She joined the Training School for Kindergartners attached to the Free Kindergarten of Dr. Newton's All Souls' Church under the direction of Miss Mary L. Van Wagenen, from which she was graduated on June 11, 1889.

After graduation, she refused numerous offers to do kindergarten teaching as she had her work cut out for her with the care of the household and the two children. She was so highly recommended, however, by her former instructor that about a year after her graduation she was persuaded to take charge of the Brooklyn Guild Kindergarten.

She commenced putting into practice the theories she had learned in the training school, which were based on Froebel's ideas of child education. Initiative or self-activity and creative ability were the qualities that Froebel emphasized in his work, but they were not given first place in the training school because it was easier to teach methods than principles. The pupils should have been told that the methods were given merely to illustrate the principles and were not to be used as devices for "busy work." The devices or methods were fascinating to the kindergartner because of the control it gave her over the children and the feeling of having gotten something from her training.

But Elizabeth had not forgotten how to observe and wonder. While giving the children a lesson in the use of cubes, cylinders, spheres, etc. it occurred to her that the children were merely following her directions and were not using their own minds. She was thinking for them. Was there any benefit to be gotten from mere copying?

She soon came to the conclusion that whatever methods might be used they must not contradict the principles which are summed up in one of Froebel's paragraphs:

> But whatever self-evident, living, absolute truth rules, the eternal principle reigns, as it were, and will on this account, **maintain a passive, following character** [*emphasis mine, ed.*]. For the living thought, the eternal principle as such demands and requires free *self-activity and self determination* on the part of man.

Though it was not easy to break away from the set routine of the kindergartner, Elizabeth noticed how the children reacted to the various devices that were used to instruct them rather than to help them express themselves. While trying to keep to the "passive following" of Froebel, she observed that the children were inclined to do the work in their own way in spite of previous instructions. She wondered what would happen if the children were left entirely to their own initiative in the use of the materials.

So, the wools, needles, sewing cards and other "gifts" were left for the children to make their own selections and the cards for sewing designs, which had been pricked to make exact forms, were changed to the soda cracker type so that the children could sew pictures according to their own desires within the limits of the straight lines. The children then originated many new designs more beautiful and varied than those the adults made for them. The variety showed the individuality of the children and verified the statement made by Froebel that each individual is unique and complete in himself. The outer manifestation became a representation of the inner need of the individual, instead of the mere copying of the kindergartner's instructions.

As Elizabeth had not gained an understanding of Froebel's vital ideas from the training school nor the kindergartners whom she met nor the books that she read, she decided to make a study of the children on her own account, by doing what Froebel advises when he said, "Come, let us with our children live."

The result was a constant loosening of the reins on the activities of the children. They not only selected their materials for their work but eventually selected their games; they became self-active. The results were so wonderful that it confirmed her in the belief that the more freedom an individual has the better will he express the innate goodness of life. It had seemed to her that devilishness, mere contrariness, rebelliousness, must be the result of suppression somewhere. Here were demonstrated the results of freedom more wonderfully than could have been expected.

It was the usual thing to open the activities in the morning in the kindergarten by having the little chairs placed in a circle so that they could all sing the good morning song together, tell stories and talk about the flowers, the weather, etc. As the chairs were put in their places before the children arrived, it was, by implication, more or less compulsory for the children to take their places in the circle as they arrived in the morning. One morning two little tots who had been hobnobbing for some days, excluding others from their deliberations, as children will do, decided not to go into the circle that morning. It was a plain case of revolt against authority. Elizabeth was at first nonplussed. Had she not given them so much freedom that they could concede at least this one requirement? Then it occurred to her that the individual can feel but one restriction at a time and why should she be giving them their freedom, when all she should do was to remove hindrances to their freedom. One restriction is as serious as many because the individual feels himself a slave to some one else's desires or demands. After that morning, she decided that the children would not be required to sit in the circle if they decided otherwise, but few of them refrained from joining the circle for they liked the songs and the stories. It was merely requested of the independents that they should not disturb the storytelling and the singing. Some time after Elizabeth resigned from the Guild, Martin Battle, who had been living in Denver,. came back to New York a sick man and soon passed on. So we married in September, 1898, and turned our thoughts to the possibility of continuing the work of education by ourselves. We had thought of moving into a neighborhood of many children so that we could have a school kindergarten of our own in the house.

A friend in Philadelphia, Miss Otis, with four adopted children, induced us to wait a year so she could dispose of her large house, as she wanted her girls to attend our school. Mrs. J. Stanwood Menken persuaded her brother-in-law, S. Levy Lawson, to join with his children. Mr. Lawson and I spent much time in and around New York to find a suitable place and finally located in New Rochelle where we found a large house for Miss Otis, next to a smaller one for the school, and one nearby for the Lawson family. A tenement was in sight a street away which housed a number of children. In order to be free with my time, I resigned from a business position and took up dental prosthesis for a living.

We called the school the "Children's Playhouse." Mrs. Menken supplied money for materials and rent and we gave our time. There was no charge for attendance although most of the parents could afford it. We did not want money to enter into the question of attendance at the "Children's Playhouse." The school was opened on October 1st, 1901. Before the year was out, however, Mrs. Lawson passed away and as Mr. Lawson found his younger boy, John Howard, settling a dispute with one of the tenement house boys with his fists, he decided to send the boy to a boarding school where he would be brought up according to "Hoyle," so he moved to Yonkers.

Dr. Thaddeus Hyatt wished to join us with his children but could not afford to leave his house in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. When he got word that we were contemplating moving to some more suitable environment he came and spent an evening with us. We sat up half the night discussing the matter and he urged us to look up his neighborhood, which he claimed had as democratic an atmosphere as we could wish. At Dyker Heights we found a house suitable for the "Children's Playhouse" and other houses for the families who went with us to the new neighborhood. Mr. and Mrs. Menken also took a house in the neighborhood. Thus after one year in New Rochelle, we moved to Dyker Heights and opened the school with fifteen or sixteen children. During the year a new building was put up for us for which Miss Otis contributed the money and we moved into a building appropriate for our needs.

Elizabeth had an interesting and happy time at Dyker Heights, holding weekly meetings to which parents came at times to discuss the question of education. Visitors from Manhattan, such as Bolton Hall, Leonard Abbott and A. C. Pleydell often attended these meetings and Howard Crosby included a chapter on our school called the "American Experiment" in his *Tolstoy the Schoolmaster*. But before the fourth year misunderstandings and emotional troubles developed among the parents. Elizabeth became involved because of their habit of bringing their troubles to her. So, after four years in Dyker Heights, although our educational work was not in question, Elizabeth decided to move into a workingmen's neighborhood, as we had originally intended.

In the spring of 1906, we bought a piece of ground for a camp in Newfoundland, New Jersey, to which we took seven children who wanted to live outdoors and sleep in a tent all summer. Elizabeth did the general cooking while the girls made any desserts they wanted from apples and berries gathered by the boys. They all made their own straw beds, swept the tent, tidied up the grounds, and fetched the water as well.

The location of another school was put off until the fall when the children would have gone home. On our return to the city, Elizabeth discovered a vacant store in a tenement on Madison Street which she thought might be a good place to start a kindergarten. The street was teeming with children but the neighborhood was not conducive for an unusual school. I looked the place over and could see that it was not a suitable place to start a school for the growth of the feeling of freedom, as the people were of the orthodox type who would not appreciate such a school. Besides we could get no farther than a kindergarten. But Elizabeth was so enthusiastic about it because of the number children that I finally consented.

We started there in the fall of 1906 and we did the best we could under the circumstances. There was no yard for the children to play in so the next year we moved to a store on the next block where there was a yard. We carried on a free kindergarten for seven years until I found I would have to change my work and way of living if I wanted to retain my health. We bought a farm in Connecticut where we made our living for seven years although we had not done any heavy work before. Elizabeth not only kept a house in fine condition but also helped with the garden and the chickens. She even helped to shuck the corn and could do it well.

In 1920, Harry Kelly of the Modern School at Stelton came to plead with Elizabeth to look over the boarding house of the school. He said we could have a free hand. Elizabeth couldn't resist. We arrived on the evening of April 20, 1920. Elizabeth was then 62 years of age. We found the house and dormitory in a rundown condition with the grounds outside looking like a dump for ashes and the boarding house in debt to the tune of fourteen hundred dollars. Before the summer was over, we had been asked to take over the school as well. We felt that we must get all this under control and turn it into a home for children before adding the school to our responsibilities. As we preferred doing educational work where we could have complete care and control of the children, as was promised we would have in the boarding house, we feared taking over the school where there would be so many "day" children. We changed the name of the Boarding House to Living House so the children would not get the impression of merely boarding. We wished the children to feel it was their home.

Shortly after we started our work at the Living House to build it into a home for children, Elizabeth noticed that the small children of the colony had no center of activity and sometimes seemed to be wandering around aimlessly or as if lost for something to do. Being in sympathy always with small children as well as older ones, she offered to open a kindergarten in the old barn if the mothers would get the materials necessary, a list of which she gave them. They gladly went to work to get donations and to make small tables and stools out of old boxes and crates. At nine o'clock one morning in May or June of 1920, the kindergarten was opened with nearly all the children of the colony ready and eager to take part. Not knowing what to expect, since they had not been in kindergarten or school, they were astonished to find materials with which to do something, with which to create, so they naturally and eagerly went to work.

Curiosity about the innovation kept the older children from going up to their own school; they stood at the open doors of the old barn, diffident about going in to a kids' place. But fascinated by the colors of the wools and beads and the activity, they gradually edged their way into the room and were soon using wools on cards, building with Froebel's gifts, cubes and oblongs, and taking part in other activities of the kindergarten that they had been deprived of when younger.

When Joseph Cohen, President of the Board of The Modern School, saw activity and order under freedom—no rules, no compunction—he said it was what he had pictured in society and so conceived the idea of having us take over the school as well. Shortly afterwards he induced us to attend a special board meeting at the home of Abe Arnold, an attorney and member of the Board, at which he proposed that we take over the school as co-principals. As we did not believe in the form of school they had been carrying on—reading, writing, arithmetic and propaganda only, though they had tried art expression with Hugo Gellert as teacher—we demurred and said that we had all that we could do to help the children directly under our care in their educational growth, and besides, we felt that we could not be of much help to day pupils. But Cohen was a quietly insistent man and suggested that we could have a free hand in changing the curriculum and the use of the school building and addition of any materials that were needed. It was put up to the staff, about seven of them. Would they be willing to co-operate in the new work? They agreed.

At the Labor Day convention in September, 1920, the matter was brought before the members and the question of education was discussed and debated from eight p.m. to two a.m. without pause, after which a vote was taken and we were unanimously elected co-principals. When we took over the school on October 1st, we changed the class rooms into shops—craft shop for wood and metal work, art shop, print shop, library and study room and later a sewing and weaving room. The large auditorium was used for the kindergarten and the morning assembly.

When we opened the assembly in the morning Elizabeth suggested to the parents that they join in the circle, holding hands with the children to form a circle while singing the good morning song and other songs which Elizabeth introduced while she played the piano. After the singing she played for interpretative dancing, in which some of the mothers took part. Not many of the boys had the nerve to try but the girls did some interesting dancing.

For some time we had weekly parents' meetings for the discussion of educational problems, and after two or three years Elizabeth offered to form a class for parents to meet once a week in order to explain to them the meaning of the creative activity, initiative and self-activity of Froebel's principles.

These were well attended and the mothers took notes, asked questions and wrote small essays on the subjects discussed.

How Elizabeth stood it all was a marvel. She supervised the work at the Living House and took part in it by getting up at five in the morning to get the breakfast ready by seven o'clock, with the help of the older children, saw to it that the dining room, kitchen and dormitory were cleaned and put in order, and was at school by nine to open the assembly by playing the piano, introducing the songs and then carrying on the kindergarten until 12 o'clock. She also acted as the "Aunty" of "The Hoboes" on their weekly evening socials at which they played games and acted in impromptu plays, and helped the older girls and boys at their social dances by playing the piano for them. Her menus were prepared a week in advance and in the evening she often looked over the music for new songs and to prepare her order of songs for the morning. On Saturdays she helped to do the weekly house cleaning.

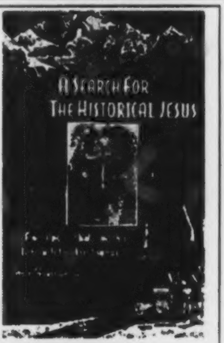
On Sundays she saw many of the mothers who were anxious to have some word with her. Toward the end of our stay, in 1924, and 1925, she played the piano for community singing and folk dancing on Sunday nights, in order to bring discordant elements into harmony, which she seemed to do for the time that the Sunday night gatherings were carried on. Outside influences, however, never cement discordant elements into friendships; that must come from within.

All this activity lasted while Elizabeth was between sixty-two and sixty-eight years of age, during which time she had to go away for a few months to recuperate. After five and a half years of strenuous work at the school and Living House, we resigned to go to our place in Newfoundland, New Jersey, where we lived until 1935. In 1934, Elizabeth had a slight stroke which affected her hand and her speech slightly. After some treatments, she seemed as well as ever, at least mentally, and so we were urged to return to the Modern School at Stelton again. We went back in June, 1935.

After a few years of activity at the school, in hurrying home in a storm on a hot day when she refused to ride, Elizabeth reached the house somewhat exhausted. It was characteristic of Elizabeth to go through with what she had undertaken to do, sometimes to her own detriment. She had started to walk so she was determined to do it. The next morning she had another slight stroke which affected her hand again. She decided that she would not attend school any more. She was then in her eightieth year. She still attended to her housework with my help, until she again broke the rules in the care of her health.

On June 12th, 1942, I came home at noon to find Elizabeth in her chair beside the radio with the pan of peas that she had been shelling on the floor. With the help of a friend we managed to get her to bed, but she could not understand what had happened or why she was so helpless.

On the 24th of November, 1942, she had a fourth stroke. But with careful nourishment, she was able to make herself understood and could sit up in a chair And so she lived until April 12th, 1944, when she passed away from an internal hemorrhage at about ten a.m., at the age of eighty-seven.



A Search for the Historical Jesus from Apocryphal, Buddhist, Islamic & Sanskrit Sources

by Professor Fida Hassnain

Millions of people have been brought up with the idea that Jesus' life mission ended with crucifixion, to redeem our sins. This is becoming an untenable proposition. Professor Hassnain, a leading cross-cultural researcher of the life of Jesus, presents another story.

Jesus came to teach the known world, not just the Roman Empire. Professor Hassnain has found manuscripts and evidence that:

- the secretive Essene Order raised and protected Jesus;
- Jesus' missing youth was spent in Persia and India;
- many obscured Gospels reveal the fact that Jesus' work was backed by Essene operations involving far more than twelve male apostles;
- Jesus survived the Cross, by an undercover plan which fooled many;
- Jesus ministered to Jews in Persia, Afghanistan, India and Central Asia, with Thomas and Simon Peter;
- Moses, Jesus and mother Mary were buried in Kashmir amongst people of Jewish faith and origin
- the Church in the West, over centuries, has gone to great lengths to remove evidence of this, to strengthen its position as the representative of Christ on earth.

Citing many historical documents, Professor Hassnain, as director of Museums and Antiquities in Kashmir, himself a Sufi, respectfully questions what we have been taught. Discovering records of Jesus in Ladakh, he used his position to research what is presented in this book.

Gateway Books, Bath BA2 8QJ, U.K.

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It felt as though the following review belonged here, right after Jon Scott's heartfelt description of his childhood paradise and then Alexis Ferm's equally heartfelt biography of his wife Elizabeth. The remaining reviews start on page 74.

REVIEW:

THE MODERN SCHOOL MOVEMENT,
Anarchism and Education in the United States

by Paul Avrich
1980 Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ
447 pages (hardcover)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

This brilliant, painstakingly researched work is an essential addition to the body of literature on alternative education. I say this because, as the author himself so astutely points out, just as the most current freedom-in-education movement born of the 1960s was beginning to make its first loud rumbles, the last of the Modern Schools was quietly closing its doors for the final time. And few of the new generation of proponents of radical educational change in America appeared to take notice, and further, to honor those who had gone before them.

Avrich's excellent book accomplishes a great many things; but for this reviewer its greatest value is just such an honoring of the previous generation of risk-takers and rule-breakers who sowed the seeds of change which so many of us are attempting to harvest today. It is critically important that every social movement recognize its roots and learn from its past successes and failures. In other words, "the movement" of the 60s and 70s did not invent itself and Avrich's subject here, the Modern School Movement, was one of its most immediate philosophical and idealogical predecessors.

Thanks to Avrich, Professor of History at Queens College and the Graduate School at the City University of New York, we now have a permanent record of the Modern School Movement and an intimate, exquisitely detailed look at the people and principles which, under the loose heading of anarchism, would create some twenty schools across the nation. These were schools where students would learn in an atmosphere of freedom and self-reliance, and schools many of which would be embedded within surrounding intentional communities whose avowed purpose was to bring about radical social and political change.

Avrich's approach is largely biographical, based on dozens of extensive interviews with surviving Modern School teachers and students (who still gather annually in New Jersey for a joyous day-long reunion). We are treated to a fly-on-the-wall view of the movement's origins and what made it tick, as well as what split schools and communities apart—usually the simple inability of people to hang in together long enough to work out their differences, which were many in those wild and politically contentious days.

The Modern School Movement, which spanned the years from roughly 1910 to 1960, was the product of an era when radical experimenters in art, education and communal living all came together to pursue common goals, the highest of which was to create a better world for all. The overriding belief which sustained them was this: If we could only raise a generation of children who were free of race and class predjudice, of a belief in the necessity of war, and who could think their own minds and solve their own problems, then a new social order would, in fact, be possible.

This is a story for the ages. A late-19th/early 20th century Spanish anarchist named Francisco Ferrer decides that power politics and political violence are not the way to effect positive and lasting social change. Instead, he elects to fly directly in the face of a fascistic monarchy and start a school for children based on freedom of choice and expression, learning for learning's sake and the imperative of finding one's own truth. He believes that the best way to create a just society is simply to raise a new generation of children on just, humane and democratic principles; and so he starts a small school in Barcelona. Further, Ferrer believes that what society calls education is not some sort of preparation for life, but is life itself. From both precursors and contemporaries like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Kropotkin and Tolstoy he borrows key words like "freedom," "spontaneity." "creativity," "individuality" and "self-realization."

Named the Modern School at a time when "modern" wasn't yet a dirty word, it becomes perhaps the first co-educational school in the history of the Spanish nation-state. But, before long the monarchy feels very threatened by this small experiment in such a radically new way of educating young children. It's no small wonder, because also basic to Ferrer's philosophy is the intention to develop individuals who are equipped mentally, morally and physically to fight to build a future libertarian society. Quoting Ferrer, "... we want men who will continue unceasingly to develop; men who are capable of constantly destroying and renewing their surroundings and renewing themselves; men whose intellectual independence is their supreme power, which they will yield to none; men always disposed for things that are better, eager for the triumph of new ideas, anxious to crowd many lives into the life they have."

It's not hard to see how words like these would be threatening in a society utterly controlled by Church and State; and so, suddenly Ferrer is accused of treason, arrested and summarily executed. However, news of his martyrdom and his highly successful school spreads quickly around the world and Ferrer Modern Schools begin to sprout up like weeds—hence the birth of the "Modern School Movement." In the U.S. his ideas are adopted by a diverse group of New York City radicals, the best known among them Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger and Will Durant. The end-result is the evolution of the Stelton School and community in Stelton, New Jersey, of which *ΣΚΟΛΕ*'s own Free School is in so many ways a direct descendent, as well as other anarchist schools and communities like the Mohegan Colony, located a few miles east of Peekskill, New York.

Like the utopian communities Amana and New Harmony which preceded them, these anarchist schools and communities eventually outlived the times which had inspired and sustained them. What remains with us today are several handsful of their surviving members and Avrich's loving retelling of their stories. This is a must read for anyone connected with the idea of freedom in education.

AERO-GRAMME

The Alternative Education Resource Organization Newsletter

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Ted Strunck is known to many of our readers as the inspired teacher at Upland Hills School in northern Michigan who organized his seventh- and eighth-graders into a team which designed and built a bridge together! Not an ordinary bridge: this one is an ***archetypal*** *bridge, as Ted reminds us and as we know full well here at the ΣΚΟΛΕ offices, having featured Ted's article about the process in the Fall, 1995 issue with his image of the completed structure on the cover! It's the most* ***evocative*** *bridge I've ever seen!*

Recently, I contacted Ted by e-mail, and received the following response, which included the two articles which follow. The stained glass image of their bridge that Ted and his kids have created since 1994 graces the front cover as accompaniment to his accounts of their most recent projects.

TWO FROM UPLAND HILLS:

Dear Mary,

I was honored to get a personal letter from you. ... I'm always inspired by you and the work you do. I've thoroughly enjoyed the issue with ex-gov Cuomo on it. I found many articles of great interest in there.

My sympathies for your loss. We have just lost my father-in-law whom I loved dearly. I remember reading a brief tribute to your late husband in one of the issues of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*. He must have been a wonderful helpmate and inspiration for you.

I've attached a small article on our latest project—a solar heated bio-dome. It's been a long road. Lots of problems to work out etc. In some ways its much more complex than the bridge. It's like a living machine.

Also in the article on the dome, I mention a stained glass window my group designed and built. I'll send you a picture and a slide [*On the cover, ed.*]. That could be an article in itself too. We also made a short documentary film of that project. It is an example of Dewey's idea that the art of a school should represent the work that goes on there. It mythologizes the bridge.

I'll also attach a short article I wrote for our school newsletter. It tells about my experiment with a self-governing classroom. Phew! That was a tough one. But, like all experiments, there was a lesson to be learned.

OUR SOLAR-HEATED BIO-DOME

by Ted (and Jane)* Strunck

In the Fall of 1995, after finishing the bridge (see *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, Vol.XII, No.4), my group and I began formulating plans for a domed greenhouse. We drew pictures and gathered books on solar greenhouses and domes. I had a copy of *The DomeBook One* and therein we found the mathematical info we needed to do the calculations. It's just basic trig but for a 7th and 8th grader we had to have the formulas.

We did the calculations for a 2′ dia. model we could build with 1/8″ dowels and hubs cut from vinyl tubing. It worked great! We had a model we could set in the middle of the room and dream about its actualizing.

The first question was what materials could we use to build it. They had to be lightweight, flexible, able to withstand UV rays, easy to work with, impervious to moisture rot, and readily available. We decided on grey plastic electrical conduit for the struts. It was cheap, easy to cut, very lightweight and UV resistant. The hubs were a different story. If you're familiar with a geodesic dome, you know the angles involved at the hubs are complex. We thought that instead of dealing with those complex angles, why not use a flexible material for the hubs? We had built our model that way and it worked fine. So we designed a hub made of vinyl tubing that would conform to any angle necessary. We put together a few struts and hubs in the classroom. Beautiful! They fit snugly and were infinitely flexible.

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* Ted sent on this article last April in response to a query from me for an update on the activities of his class at Upland Hills School. This, and the article which follows, is an answer to my question. Also, please note that the gorgeous cover is from a slide he sent me of a stained glass window they had made together of their bridge (see *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, Fall, 95 for his account of the building of this archetypal structure!)

Ted signed his two articles, "Ted and Jane Strunck!!" I'm dying to know what part Jane has been playing in this whole burst of creativity with kids! I'll bet it's been a significant one! I'll be reporting in from time to time.

During the winter, we cut the struts and made our hubs and waited for Spring.

At last we could get outside and put this huge tinkertoy thing together. Just behind our school there's a south-sloping hillside where once there sat a solar collector. The collector had rotted away years ago but there remained a 1,000 gallon tank buried in that hillside. It's there we decided to construct our dome—right over that water tank. We had dug away some of the earth around the tank and carried about 300 rocks to make a retaining wall across the back of the greenhouse and around the tank. The tank full of water and the rocks would give us plenty of thermal mass. We were ready to start the assembly. The struts were all color-coded and we had the model on hand, one of the kids directing the insertions of struts into hubs and kids holding up each successive hub, standing on ladders and balancing in the air. During the assembly we noticed the struts weren't staying in the hubs like they had in the classroom. We realized the warm sun was softening the vinyl tubing. It made the process very difficult.

Finally all the struts were in place and we slowly took our supports away. The dome stood there on its own like some magical levitating structure and then it began to crumble like a huge skeleton of some prehistoric bird. We stood there and watched in silence as it collapsed. One of the girls said, "We need to put set screws where the struts fit into the hubs." Yeah. That's just what we did. The rest of the week was spent redoing the assmbly process—this time with set screws. It held just fine. Every 1/2 hour or so one of my kids went out to check it. Yep. It was still standing. Hoorah!

It stood most of the summer. By July, several of the hubs were sagging. This wouldn't do for a support for our greenhouse. We needed something different for our hubs. We knew it had to be a rigid material.

Whenever I'm involved in one of these projects, I make it a habit to talk to as many people as possible about the problems we're having. I invariably find solutions. It happened again with the 'hub problem'. In our parent community is a guy who owns a company called Accurate Stamping. He had just purchased new software that would enable him to calculate the intricacies of a complex angle such as the hub of a geodesic dome on his cadcam. He was anxious to try it out. One of my students and I spent an afternoon at his shop watching the huge monitor turn the hemispherical shape this way and that and finally coming up with the needed info. He was generous enough to provide us with the forms we needed to product vacuum-formed hub pieces we could make using ABS plastic.

This brings us all the way into the winter of the following school year. We've got the hub pieces and we just have to cut them into circles. It's a sandwich-kind-of-thing. Each hub consisting of 2 parts that fit over the struts. Works beautifully. Very rigid. Excellent.

You may be wondering how do these kids afford this stuff. Well my group has a weekly pizza sale. Every Friday is Pizza Day and we bring in a net of $60 - $70. It adds up. Keeps these projects going.

Okay: Spring arrives. We assemble the bottom row of pentagons and hexagons. Off to the side, we put the upper pents and hexes together. Then we lift the top onto the bottom and screw them into place. It works! It's solid. Four of us slowly make our way to the top of the dome and lie there suspended in space as if by magic.

That brings us to the end of another school year. Also this group finished building a magnificent stained glass window. We finished both projects the same week! It was triumphal. The window stands 4'x4' and depicts 'The Bridge' leading up into the sun.

I've enclosed a picture and a color slide [*See cover pic, ed.*].

The Fall of this past year finds me with a new group of kids. At Upland Hills, we teachers are lucky enough to get kids for two years. I think that's what it takes to get to know them well and to deveop some deep personal relationships. Anyway, we get to work on the greenhouse. We haul more rocks, build our grow beds, get our irrigation system in place and try and figure out how we're going to 'skin' this monster.

Our irrigation system deserves some scrutiny as it's rather ingenious. At the top of the hill just behind the dome, we placed an upside-down chicken coop roof that was lying around the property. It acts as an excellent rain catcher. From there the water runs through a pipe into the 1,000 gal. tank. Lower still are our grow beds. When the water in the tank reaches a certain height, it flows through a series of hoses into trickle tubes buried in our beds. It's all gravity-driven and keeps our grow beds moist. It'll be interesting to see if this all flows in the winter months. That's our hope.

Back to the 'skinning' problem. I applied for and got a grant from our local utility company (Detroit Edison) to help us purchase some good quality polyethylene film for our skin. It's 10 mil. thick, 3-ply and UV stablized. It's guaranteed for four years, but we'll see. We sat with our model and discussed what might be the best way to piece the skin onto the structure. Too big a piece and we got too many puckers. We finally decided to go with a full pentagon and half hexes. We attached the pieces using battens we made by cutting a slightly larger tube into quarters. It's worked fine. We put the final piece on the dome two hours before the end of school this year.

So that's where we are. Next fall we'll get the plant experiments going. I want to produce food crops—lettuce, beans, etc. We'll try doing hydroponics for tomatoes.

We'll have to winterize the greenhouse somehow. It's all a grand experiment and my objective is that along the way, we learn how miraculous it is that there is life on a spinning, whizzing rock in space where water flows and sunlight and air and dirt converge to enable beings to eat solar energy.

OUR EXPERIMENT WITH DEMOCRACY

In my class this year, while studying the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth, I was struck by the significance of that event for the first time. As they sat at anchor, just off Plymouth Rock, the Pilgrims decided they would not set foot on land until they had worked out an agreement among themselves on how they would live together without benefit of a king or a governor, or a parliament or anyone of authority to tell them what to do. They realized that for the first time in human history, a group of people was about to try and govern themselves.They began to write the 'Mayflower Compact' in which they laid down a fairly simple code of conduct to guide them in their daily affairs.

Well, I thought, let's see just how difficult this might be. I promptly abdicated all my authority as Teacher. I wanted the group to experience the feeling of being free from 'tyranny'. I couldn't just say, "Okay, lets pretend . . ." . No, it had to be an authentic feeling of being free to find what they needed.

It was general mayhem and chaos. Finally someone suggested we set up some rules. I was overjoyed! They came to that on their own. It was easier said than done. We could hardly agree on two simple rules of decorum and even then it was hard to maintain order. The privileges, on the other hand, gushed out like a torrent. All rights and no responsibilities. Something was out of balance. I hadn't forseen the difficulty in convincing a group of teenagers that along with privileges comes responsibilities. I tried but they just didn't seem to believe it.

Well, by Christmas break, I'd had enough. I found myself losing control, not only of the group but of myself as well. It was time to pull in the reins. That's a tough one—to take back what you've already given up. Slowly, I was able to reestablish the benevolent dictatorship characteristic of 99% of the classrooms in this great Democracy of ours. I simply needed a saner place to come to every day and I think my kids did too.

It was a rough few months but the democratic classroom has become my *ideé fixe* for now. We may try again next year, more skillfully, knowing what to expect and how to elicit the necessary ingredients for a working democracy.

These ideas were gleaned from the writings of John Dewey, Alfie Kohn and Margeret Wheatley among others. There were no step-by-step instructions, just the rationales and concepts. We had to feel our way. Here at Upland Hills, we can pursue an ideal and learn through process.

The end? Who knows what or when. We do know now that to "do democracy" is hard and requires a good deal of effort, involvement and self-discipline. That's a lesson in itself.

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This article originated as a stirring keynote address by John Taylor Gatto at a summer conference at Goddard College a couple of years ago. I am always hopeful that what John says or writes, expressed as it is in the metaphors of grass roots radicalism, may be understood by readers of a wide variety of political persuasions as expressing his passionate advocacy for the very people so many see as human garbage, rather than the specific advocacy of one particular political program!

John's use of broad brush strokes to delineate some of the historical derivations of our current political and educational follies seems to create occasional misunderstandings of his rhetoric. Like Jonathan Kozol, Ron Miller, Bill Kaul and John Potter—among others—failing to see the philosophical forest because of the political trees that get in the way may obscure his (and their) prophetic significance for us all. Reformers seldom find themselves able to cooperate with reformers of a slightly different political stripe!

I am reminded of the last image in the film "On the Beach": a tattered banner blowing in the wind of a deserted Australian city street, "There Is Still Time, Brother." It sometimes feels as though we as a people have been fed such a huge bellyful of indigestible lies that we have no space left for the nourishment of truth. Boy, do I hope I'm wrong! Anyhow, here's our John:

RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND OUR FUTURE: A CALL TO ACTION

The Dialectics of Liberty

by John Taylor Gatto

Keynote Speech: Pitkin Conference, Goddard College,
Plainfield Vt, July 15, 1995

The vital warfare taking place all around us in school and society is independent of the traditional historical dichotomies like left/right, rich/poor, Democrat/Republican, conservative/liberal, etc. A poor, radically leftist, self-styled liberal Democrat who wants to stick his nose in my family's business, pick my pocket with oppressive taxation, further the interests of a global economy and force my children to swallow his notion of what an education should be about is exactly the same sort of enemy as a rich, radically rightist, self-styled conservative Republican who wants to do the same thing. I see no important difference between the parties, having not been raised to believe money was the decisive variable in having a good life, but that freedom to make crucial decisions is.

What defines the important debate is whether this planet is going to be managed centrally and scientifically, by a trained professional bureaucracy with comprehensive control over licensing and employment, with exclusive police power to manage dissent, and with a dossier on each one of its citizens—or whether the planet's critical management is going to be localized, each miniature community free to develop as its people see fit. Put simply, should families, neighbors and individuals be at the center of things or should scientific government and government-appointed overseers?

You will have guessed the side I'm on by now, but all personal bias aside, I'd like you to consider this as a question with immense implications for your own life, not some mere abstraction of the Jacobins. While it looks at present as if the contest has already been decided in favor of the centralizers, I believe the decade just ahead will reveal how powerful local forces, which have been driven to the point of madness by developments of the past century, really are in their determination not to allow any more centralization to take place. In my opinion things like the recent demonstration with ammonium nitrate fertilizer, the nerve gas attack in Japan and the resistance at Waco and Ruby Ridge are stark evidence a crisis is arriving. If we would settle matters lawfully, which is the genius written into the original documents of our system, then we have to be prepared to allow the voices stifled in our anti-democratic century to speak.

The question I posed to you by implication, whether you will live as a numbered, assigned citizen in a rational form of global governance, or as a holdout for independence and self-reliance, is inherently uncompromisable, as difficult a position as that puts most of us in. Like abortion, we are compelled to move in one direction or the other; to stand still is to find yourself driven by events: you abort or you give birth—there is no middle ground.

I can't make your mind up for you on this grave question, nor would I do so even if I were able to, but what I can hope to show you is how this moment of democratic crisis came about, at least in part, and in what direction the centralization movement has been headed in since at least 1896. I'll try not to demonize the centralizers as I proceed, but first I have a story to tell you about peaceful, decentralized Vermont.

2.

The town of Benson in western Vermont voted down its current school budget nine times as I write these words, establishing a state record for negativity according to *EDUCATION WEEK* newspaper (issue of June 14, 1995). Assistant Superintendent Charlie Usher, who is made out to be a thoughtful man in the article, was bewildered at the community's irresponsibility. Usher is quoted as saying, "The answer is getting at the root of why people would be willing to let their schools fall apart and think someone else will catch them."

I read this amazing newspaper account three times before its fact-content floated up out of the pro-school slant. Let me feed you the facts as *EDUCATION WEEK* delivered them, except instead of scattering them around over two pages, I have grouped them. We will consider this a clinic in how to read.

There are exactly 137 children in Benson's brand-new school building (and school district). This new school caused property taxes to go up 40% last year, quite a shock to those just hanging onto their homes by their fingernails. Many in town had claimed a new building was not needed, but the State condemned the old structure demanding it either be brought into compliance with the code—at a cost near the estimated price of the new school—or deliver a "yes" vote on the new building plans.

As you might expect the new school was voted, albeit narrowly. The building cost much more than voters expected, though perhaps I might be forgiven a little skepticism whether it cost more than the State of Vermont expected, a much different animal.

Oddly enough, though I'm from western Pennsylvania, I happen to have some prior experience with the Vermont State Education Department's condemning school structures. Give me a minute and you'll see that what I know may have a bearing on Benson. Northeast of the state capitol in Montpelier, about 35 or 40 miles, is the town of Walden where four one-room schoolhouses were condemned two or three years ago. The people of Walden asked me to come and speak at a rally where the "Road Rats" (that's what they called themselves) were trying to mobilize support to vote down the new centralized school.

The anti-centralizers had already won once, beating back the project, but now the State had condemned the traditional structures, and all estimates to bring them up to code were in many hundreds of thousands of dollars, close enough to the price of a new school that it looked like the resisters no longer had the heart to fight for the old schools.

When I arrived in Walden I toured the condemned structures. They were handsome, honest little buildings, and seemingly sound as a dollar. Just by chance I happened to have drunk some beer a few years earlier with a Vermont master architect in Provincetown, Massachusetts where he was building an entire Cape Cod home by himself with one local bad boy as assistant to show it could be done for almost nothing. In the parking lot of the Admiral Benbow* Inn, he put the house up in six weeks for a cost of $45,000.

When I phoned he agreed to drive right over and look at the Walden schools and the State estimates. After doing both he pronounced the condemnations/estimates as cynical and fraudulent: fraudulent because they were three or four times higher than the work could have been done by an independent contractor making a profit, and cynical because my architect friend knows the politically well-connected firms which delivered the bids.

"The purpose of this is to kill the one-room schools," he said. When I asked him to submit a competitive bid, he said he could not. "I wouldn't get another job in the State of Vermont if I did." So much for moonshine in Vermont.

Now let me get back to Benson and its school budget. Here in a jurisdiction serving 137 children, a number which could be managed brilliantly by eight teachers without any supervision other than what the town's willing citizens could provide—and historically *did* provide, we are led to believe that a small, poor community must sustain the expense of:

1) non-teaching Superintendent
2) A non-teaching Assistant Superintendent
3) A non-teaching Principal
4) A full-time Nurse
5) A full-time "Guidance" Counselor

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* Name changed to foil Montpelier thought police.

6) A full-time librarian
7) Eleven full-time schoolteachers
8) An unknown number of secretaries, part-time "specialists," nutritionist, custodial help, etc.
9) Fax machines, copy machines, telephones, state of the art computers and much more.

Eliminating the first six positions, three of the teachers and the accessory personnel—and having them absorbed by the remaining teachers and community volunteers—would not only save $500,000, about 55% of the total budget, but far from over-burdening the eight teachers (and their 17-each student charges), it would give them a genuinely professional, communitarian workplace, much more interesting and useful for educational purposes than the present overstaffed chain-of-command hothouse.

I see from a chart included in the news article that Vermont school bureaucrats extract $6000 for each student who sits in their spanking new schools, $142 a week per kid. How is it, do you suppose, that the private schools of the United States can provide a satisfactory level of service for a national average of only $3000 a kid? Or that parochial schools can do it for $2300? Or home schools for between $500-1000?

How is that? Don't answer, allow me. These other named entities don't have to support a vast pyramid of political jobs; they value learning, but don't make the mistake of overvaluing teaching or expertise—and they understand, perhaps instinctively, that transferring responsibility from children, parents and communities to regions of certified expert employees of the state destroys the value base of human life, creating a lifelong mass of dependent, incompletely human raw material.

It would be superficial not to point out that the hiring of all these functionaries in Benson is the propagation of a social philosophy distinctly contrary to the Anglo-American philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which gave us a United States in the first place. This social policy, utterly illegitimate in the popular mind, is aimed at centrally providing jobs at the expense of education, family relations and intellectual endeavor—and much more. All values in such a scheme have to be adjusted to the maintenance of a prescribed economic order, by agreement if available, by guile if possible and by force if necessary.

3.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century a decision gradually was made through consensus at the highest levels of American business, government and private association, that Democracy would be unsuitable for the planned economy and society that was coming. In a theological sense it was a shift from the democratic and local forms of Congregationalism, the original New England religion, and perhaps the representative democracy of Presbyterianism, to the aristocratic formal ordering and discipline of Episcopalianism. We have a neat numerical evidence of this shift in a 318% increase in Episcopal church enrollment during this period, an explosion of hereditary societies like The Society of California Pioneers, The Order of the Crown of Charlemagne, Order of the Three Crusades, 1096-1192, The Society of the Founders of Norwich, Connecticut, The Society of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy and so on, and the opening of a genealogy department at Tiffany's in New York. When the president of Stanford claimed descent from King David of Scotland and J.P.Morgan and William Howard Taft did, too, the decision for a new America with a new no-nonsense kind of state schooling became irrevocable.

In its grandest conception this was far from a sinister thing. It represented a decision which, it would be argued, was made for the most rational of motives—the scientific management of economy and society. The best people were tired of the *surprises* of history; they were determined to have a predictable future that would be best for all, not just for themselves. This thinking followed the academic philosophy of Utilitarianism, aiming to produce the most happiness for the most people, the greatest good for the greatest number.

Happiness, as anyone possessed with common sense could see, required that management be surrendered to trained and certified experts, a *meritocracy*. If most of the meritocratic came from the élite classes, that only proved Darwin's case, and Spencer's, the cream comes to the top—not that there was a class conspiracy to keep others down. This decision to lock in the social/economic ladder through classification-schooling, oddly enough was made in the face of a national success created by ill-lettered, untutored men like Carnegie, Rockefeller, Edison, etc., who would certainly not have been able to accomplish what they did in the face of such a procedure—and even odder, it was largely made by these men themselves, in the forefront of which group was Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller and the formidable titan of finance, J.P. Morgan.

For those of you too young to remember, it will help if you keep in mind that by 1914, after these men had established the new income tax code and the new federal reserve system, Rockefeller and Carnegie between them were spending more than the government did on what was called "Education." Again, far from being sinister in their planning, these cosmic decisions were made after long periods of intense consultation with university presidents, leading scientists and engineers, famous men of the dominant religions, equally famous public intellectuals like Sidney and Beatrice Webb, H.G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, Margaret Sanger, men of education like John Dewey, from psychology, like G. Stanley Hall, from sociology, like Emile Durkheim, and there were many more.

Universal compulsion schooling was finally going to be enforced; it was going to be scientized; it would become in time the arbiter of jobs, licenses, prestige and rewards. Its practitioners and graduates would be cared for in the new scheme of welfare capitalism which had been ordained, but in exchange the pedagogues would take orders from far away and the graduates must present themselves contented, disciplined, energetic, dependent and dependable. Unlike Cassius, they should not think too much.

Don't think of this as a conspiracy against children; it was just the opposite—it was a conspiracy *for* children against the dark forces of ignorance represented by their parents, their religions and their unfortunate personal histories. What would follow in the next century was an overwhelming cascade of *noblesse oblige*, through which, perhaps, the millennium could be reached. The experiment was worth a try.

Rather than abandon the term "Democracy," which America revered, it was decided to slowly redefine the word. That strategy was in particular the contribution of the Fabians. Never alarm possible opposition, but proceed as you might when boiling a lobster to death—if begun in cold water the beast doesn't realize it's being killed.

4.

I want to show you the track of the anti-democratic social plan through the past 100 years in the words of some of its prominent proponents. Academically, it has a formal name, "The Theory of Democratic Elites," and it arises in modern form first in 1885, in a book by Britain's most prestigious legal mind, that of Sir Henry James Sumner Maine, perhaps the most brilliant classical scholar of all time. The book, *Popular Government*, attacked popular democracy as sabotage, claiming that civilization could only exist by a forceful thwarting of public will.

The actual theory of élites, however, we owe to an Italian intellectual whose book, *The Ruling Class*, in 1896 revealed the revolutionary secret of political immortality, a destiny which had so far eluded every nation and dynasty in history. It was revolutionary. The élites must selectively *feed* on the brains and courage of lesser classes, said Mosca, drawing the best of these continuously up into the élites to refresh them, while at the same time robbing the groups they came from of their potential leadership. Mosca hit the élite world like a 10-ton truck, remaining in print for the next 43 years in subsequently refined evolutions of the basic idea that a ruling class, using this mechanism, could perpetuate itself indefinitely!

Mosca had developed for political/pedagogical use a fascinating theory of Sir Henry Maine that the great success of the Anglo-Saxons had come about largely because they had no sentimentality at all about children. When they raided an enemy village, they always stole the best children and converted them by an institution of mass adoption into Anglo-Saxons. Sometimes whole villages, said Maine, were composed of people with fictitious ancestry! Thus by devouring the children of others for their *utility*, rather than for any of a host of sentimental or mystical needs blood families have for association, the Anglo-Saxons solved many problems of long-term survival which doomed lesser peoples without the secret—either to extinction or subservience.

This is powerful medicine. In the hands of an organized, sophisticated and ambitious élite, you might expect such theory, once accepted, to begin to reflect itself in direct, effective shaping of the training of the young, and where modern schooling is the issue you would not be disappointed. Although many vectors merge in the last part of the nineteenth century to explain the new template suddenly forced upon government schooling, and most private schooling as well, though more gently, the theory of democratic élites provides an important map into very poorly understood terrain.

Mosca asserted, sometimes boldly, sometimes subtly depending on which edition of *The Ruling Class* you pick up, that through what Skinner would later call "positive" and "negative" reinforcements, status rewards, material incentives and punishments, ultimate loyalty would be transferred to the dominant élite, while a shell of apparently representative democracy would remain. After all, the member of the elevated minority would be said to have been rewarded for his merit (which would be true), and to be representing the interests of his tribe of origin in his new life (which would almost never be true).

There was a logic to justify a precise form of schooling which might eliminate the instability of every past society. His implied recommendations for schooling:

1) It should be a field for constant surveillance of the children of the masses.
2) It should become a behavioral training ground; intellectual training was counter-productive.
3) The common-school idea should be abandoned, replaced with intricately articulated hierarchies in both the student class and the pedagogical class. Precise control would be made easier this way on the divide and conquer principle.
4) External rewards and punishments should be stressed as the reason to study; public honors, rewards and disgraces would be taught as superior to private alternatives.

By 1909 the theme of democratic élitism had become quite familiar; even *standardized* in business, government and the academic arenas. In that year it received an important improvement from the founder of *The New Republic* magazine, Herbert Croly, who toned down its rawer side and gave it a character bright and optimistic. The book, *The Promise*, was a triumph of paternalism: America would have a bright future of "opportunity, fulfillment and prosperity" if local authority was turned over to an activist central government which, through expert prescriptions, would set the direction of American life, harnessing resources—including "human resources" like children—regulating the economy, defining the common good, securing the general welfare.

The Promise of American Life profoundly influenced Teddy Roosevelt's Progressive Party platform in 1912, and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs of 1932-1945, which, behind a high-spirited pseudo-democratic facade, embodied the essence of the theory of democratic élites, a government so intrusive this country's founders would have pronounced it dictatorial.

The next step on our journey will inspect another phenomenally influential book, this time Walter Lippman's *Public Opinion*, published in 1922. In it, Lippman called openly for "severe restrictions on public debate". He called debate "a defect of democracy," which will give you some idea how strange this new perspective really was. The public, said Lippmann, does not know what its best interests are. The old ideal of active, participatory citizenship had to be quickly ended, according to Lippman, and important decisions reserved for "invisible experts acting through government officials."

One way to accomplish this was to sharply curtail public voting. The 80-90% turnouts of the nineteenth century would be subtly discouraged in a variety of ways understood best by students of public opinion.

By 1928, Sigmund Freud's own nephew, Edward L. Bernays, one of the two men referred to as "founders" of the new public opinion science called "public relations," claimed in a sensational book called *Crystallizing Public Opinion* that "invisible power" was already in control of every aspect of American life. This invisible power manufactured public opinion on both sides of any public question.

Bernays was not writing in protest against this—far from it; indirectly he was suggesting that by procuring his services this wizardry would be at a client's disposal. The most interesting thing about this book, and another, *Propaganda*, which he published in the same year, was the easy candor in both about the invisible control of all sides of an argument in modern society.

In the Mosca/Croly/Lippman/Bernays' definition of Democracy, people do not govern themselves. They do not make decisions. They do not expect their private opinion to be reflected regularly in the outcome of policy questions. And they do not intervene too heavily in the lives of their own children except in the role of affectionate overseers—the child-rearing privilege belongs to the State because only in that way can the State be secure about their loyalty. This is precisely Plato's case in *The Republic*.

However in exchange for the surrender of family and personal sovereignties, the State promised to deliver a higher level of comfort and security than individuals could provide for themselves. If you are to understand twentieth century schooling you need to understand that behind its seeming irresponsibility, which at times, slides into what looks like madness, lies an ice-cold logic aimed at the maximum social comfort and social security. Strange as it seems, school loves its clientèle in the abstract.

In 1935 another magnificently intellectual book reinforcing Mosca's theory was published and distributed in wholesale quantities to key officials and bureau chiefs in Washington. *The Mind and Society* was the title, Vilfredo Pareto, again an Italian social thinker, its author. 1935, the year of my own birth, was a year full of triumph for Mussolini's fascist state in Italy, a political entity deeply committed to Mosca's theory of ruling class health.

The Mind and Society put the finishing touches to the notion of democratic élites. Its scathing remarks on majority rule, human equality and the like are milestones of the depression era, a wonder to read today for their stark honesty and in such contrast to our own veiled, coded speech in an era of political correctness. Pareto stated flatly that the masses had to be intimidated, bewildered, kept off balance—as indeed they were in those years by an abnormally prolonged depression followed by a long, high-tech global war.

By 1944 the Mosca/Croly/Lippman/Bernays/Pareto theme was understood and largely accepted in every academic corner of American life, though this was still a great secret to the general public and to those doing the dying in Europe. The British welfare state was just around the corner, too. In that year, a great humanist scholar, Karl Polyani, published a magnificent study of the economic origins of our times, *The Great Transformation*, a book still in print over a half century later.

On the last page of this book its author, speaking as if for a consensus position among humanists, addresses the need to destroy common liberty for the greater end of "saving the planet." Even as early as 1944, then, we were beginning to hear the voice of Official Environmentalism, speaking to the need to end local national sovereignties (and personal sovereignty), and to centralize things under a Great Director of the planetary environment. It is nothing short of amazing that once Polyani had sounded the trumpet, from every corner of the globe came answering trumpets, and all backed by some official sanction or private organization of élites. This was, in the similarity of the language and concerns, apparently an effort long-planned and coordinated. Whatever your own position on the merits of the case, what interests me for the moment is how illustrative it is of Bernays' 1928 case that invisible élites were already behind events, on both sides of every happening.

When I hear from every corner of the educational world today, simultaneously, in the identical language, about an apocryphal African village in which every member raises every child—even though the coordinates of this strange utopia are never given—I'm reminded of Bernays.

In 1962, the new world order logic had surfaced in a presidential inaugural speech where president John Kennedy told an audience too far de-historicized by modern schooling to recognize Hobbes and Hegel when their words came out of a Boston Irishman's mouth:

> Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.

By 1975 the theme crystallized itself and made its debut as a public emergency in a book entitled *The Crisis of Democracy*, sponsored by the Trilateral Commission. The crisis, of course, wasn't that we had too little democracy, but too much. Earth was suffering from a serious disease hinted at for the entire century, now it was upon us, a disease called "Hyperdemocracy" caused by too much political participation by common people.

International order was threatened, the book suggested, because common citizens were resisting the globalization of business on the planet, resisting further surrender of their national identities and local allegiances; they were sticking their noses into important business.

It was like Kraken surfacing in Norse mythology. Now the outline of the whole monster could be seen clearly. Why did it take until 1975 to flush it up to the surface? You might well ask. Just a few years earlier an unprecedented populist uprising, of a magnitude not seen since the Panic of 1893, had brought an important war in southeast Asia to a screeching halt. Common citizens had done this. After nearly a century of forced schooling, they were still able to hold a serious thought in opposition to the State long enough to sabotage a piece of global social engineering they knew nothing about.

The Vietnam riots were virulent hyperdemocracy at its most frightening.

5.

The Trilateral antidote consisted of two pointed recommendations, both of which you have heard before from Pareto and company. First was "a narrowing of the meaning of Democracy" (Professor Polyani must have smiled in Heaven to hear it). To understand just how far that meaning can be narrowed, if necessary, you should consult with George Orwell, who associated all the time in real life with people who thought and talked this way.

The second recommendation was, if nothing else worked, "a forceful assertion of élite controls." That bears some reflection. What would forceful assertion look like in real life? A long depression? A major global war? Or could force be scaled down in an era of mass television which had the capacity to render even economical demonstration sufficiently forceful?

Fortunately, recent history is rich in such illustration. We might think of the publicly televised extermination of Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas as one such. Or the execution of an unarmed woman and her 14-year old son by an FBI sniper at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, as another.

My own personal favorite, however, is an event so wildly bizarre, so outside any normal response in its *forcefulness*, that since it happened some years back I have never encountered a single person who had seen it on television who was willing or able to discuss it. I refer to the spectacular immolation of 100,000 or more retreating Iraqi peasants—it would debase language to call them soldiers—in one blinding fireball lit by the ignition of a gasoline-drenched sky above their heads.

Here was an event seen by hundreds of millions of people, worldwide, on television, the very model of a forceful display. Can you, offhand, think of any other compelling reason why this mass execution was ordered? What troubles me most about it now, and this is probably an index of my own insensitivity after 30 classroom years as a schoolteacher, is that the death technology revealed and demonstrated is so cheap, so primitive, so effective, that to my mind it obsoleted nuclear weaponry in that instant. Surely the democratic masses would be able to duplicate such a forceful display themselves, on a miniature scale, of course, with a crop-dusting plane, or a modified snow blower, etc. and a few gallons of inexpensive unleaded. I think that forceful demonstration might backfire in time; personally I'd hang the bastards who let the genie out of the bottle.

Sorry.

My final illustration of the vast net of anti-democratic, and I believe *coordinated*, propaganda we live in and school our children in comes from the cover story of a January, 1995 *Time* magazine. Ostensibly this story protests the unwarranted power the magazine claims radio talk show hosts have gained over public opinion, but under its banal surface rhetoric a powerful subtext plays throughout the piece. Like a subliminal message to buy popcorn, this one tells you not to buy democracy. "Too much democracy is in the worst interests of national goals; the modern world is too complex to allow the man and woman in the street to interfere with its management."

6.

OK. You have the data, now let's try to interpret it. Democracy as a philosophy of management contradicts the experience of big government, big business and big institutional life. Democracy doesn't mix with any of the above.

Nor can Democracy conform with the positivistic principles of big science, big social science, or any other fiscally attractive higher academic pursuit. Scientific government cannot live with the idea of Liberty; if you'd sit still long enough and reflect, you would see that assertion is irrefutable except by radically redefining common language.

When you think about it, what kind of world view would you have to hold before you could allow a mass of ignorant people to decide important issues they knew very little about? So far I'll bet you think that's a rhetorical question, but it's not. I want an answer.

Which I'll supply myself. It would have to be under a world view that disputes the existence of such a reality as "mass man; " under a world view that says no two people are alike and every individual has a sacred and private destiny.

You'd have to believe that nothing much that really matters is beyond the reflective power of each of us, that where value is concerned every man and woman's voice is worth exactly as much as the president of Harvard's is.

You'd have to believe that each of us has the right to try to live the way he or she wants to, even if the way we choose is wrongheaded or Evil. I know it's a paradox, as much now as it was for St. Augustine, but if you can't make a freewill choice for Evil, that means you can't make a freewill choice for Good, either. There is no joy struggling to be better if the temptation to surrender and become worse isn't there, too. Society is entitled to normal safeguards, of course, but leveling people into a safe, predictable mass—which seems to eliminate the possibility for Evil, is itself the most colossal evil anyone ever conceived so far.

A skillfully orchestrated, generously financed campaign is now underway to reconstruct the school institution by quietly nationalizing it. Fortunately the people who are doing this talk to each other, so occasionally on a moonless night when the sun-spots allow it, we can hear them talking through the fillings in our teeth. In 1989, Shirley McCune, Director of the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Library, could be overheard haranguing the National Governors' conference in Wichita. This is part of what she said:

> What we're into is the total restructuring of society. That is happening in America today and what is happening in Kansas and the Great Plains is not simply a chance situation. ....it amounts to a total transformation of society ....you can't get away....

If you're old-fashioned like I am, you might wonder what Shirley knows that you don't know, and where on earth a government functionary got the *chutzpah* to talk like an insider. I mean, who *licensed* this performance? School people, as you know, never speak *ex tempore*.

It is possible that a scheme of vouchers and charter schools and de-bureaucratized public schools will be employed on the road just ahead to deceive the people into thinking they are finally being given their children back. Terms commonly heard in association with these projects are "national goals and standards," "national testing," "national curricula," "national teaching licenses," "valued outcomes," "multiculturalism."

I smell the hands of the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller endowments in all this, but whatever the compound geneses, if this campaign succeeds, then definitions of a number of critical concepts like Liberty and Family are going to once again be redefined more narrowly in the Fabian version of The Death of a Thousand Cuts.

National pedagogy fully articulated will signal an official end to the popular democratic experiment of the United States, an experiment that actually ended *de facto* in the last years of the nineteenth century. That's what those words I brought you from

Mosca, Croly, Lippman, Bernays, Pareto, Polyani, Russell, Kennedy, the Trilateral Commission, and *Time* magazine really mean.

The period 1890-1920 ushered in a comprehensive epoch of scientific management whose ultimate goal was a regulated, safe, uniform, predictable social order, one which levels all significant human differences except among the controlling élites—and *those* are only left open because of a fear the society will fatally stagnate without some conflict. Now you know the secret, too.

Moving a society into total national regulation demands great control over minds, the minds of children especially. Well-schooled children, even well-schooled "alternative school" children must surrender the right to surprise the government, either individually or in groups. This is why most alternative schools subject their charges to standardized testing; just being ranked puts a strict limit on individual enterprise. You can run, but you can't run far if you've been branded.

As I write all these things, I'm aware that from a libertarian perspective all my implied praise of democracy has a dark side. To libertarians, mob rule is seen to be a great danger to liberty just as State oppression is. Much in that point of view resonates with me.

But from where I stand government is far and away the most compelling threat because its incursions are written into statutes, protocols, licensing, taxes, police powers and permanent bureaucracies like schools which grow and grow. Mob passion is always a transient phenomenon, and mobs are sometimes ashamed of themselves afterwards, but governments never. How could they be? Shame is a human emotion and governments are abstractions run amok.

Way back in 1908, in a book called *New Worlds for Old*, the Fabian Socialist philosopher Wells—who had no use for popular democracy, like the rest of the Fabians—wrote that broad support was quite unnecessary to drive democracy from the field. All that would be needed to wreck the career of democracy would be a slow, imperceptible transfer of power from elected officials to government bureaucrats, themselves unelected, whose power could be kept free from effective oversight by tenure and complicated judicial procedures. Now you know how another of the tricks has been managed.

The American Congress has surrendered its money-issuing power to a group of private banks whose deliberations allow no public view; the war-making power has been surrendered to the Executive Office; much of the legislative power has been preempted by unelected courts through the grotesque provision of judicial review, hardly exercised before this half of the century, which denies people power over the laws they want until the court approves those laws.

The brilliant dialectical balance struck between two very dangerous forces, mob and management, by our constitution was to allow popular will free expression as a check on government, and conversely to allow government power to check popular interference with individual rights or property. In the push/pull dialectic of democracy versus State, space is opened for personal, family and small group liberties.

A vigorous democracy then is our best guarantee of liberty, but liberty as I said before is not compatible with scientific management. The contradiction between the two is enormous, but it has gone unexamined because powerful interests wish it that way. Liberty means the right to follow your own star, raise your own children as you choose, whether the scientific managers of society or economy like it or not.

Scientific management is a way to freeze power relationships and stabilize society in other ways as well. The synthetic present it ordains only changes upon the decisions of élite managerial cadres. Scientific management is a way to end history, unlike liberty, which is the ultimate principle of social evolution. It goes without saying that with millions of people making private decisions the direction of the entire society and its economy will be, over time, partially or wholly unpredictable. That's the price we pay for being fully alive. I don't look at it as a price at all but a blessing.

This constant confrontation, this unwinnable war, between two flawed collectivizing principles, one that of abstract government, the other of raw public opinion given power by real democratic institutions produces liberty for those who want it. In the stalemate of dangerous forces, liberty escapes. Any serious attempt to sabotage democracy by the final nationalization of American schooling must be opposed, even by force if necessary, before it destroys the dialectic which produces liberty.

We don't need to guess what a harvest of nationally socialized children would look like because this fate has happened to plenty of kids all through this most unnatural of centuries. Let me wrap this up by talking about the great societies of our time which would not have been possible without a fully rationalized national schooling scheme.

Let me begin with the Japanese empire which overran Asia. Japan modeled its system of schooling directly after Prussia's in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It swallowed the Prussian system lock, stock and barrel along with the Prussian constitution. The extra measure of homogeneity and discipline provided, gave Japan's élite military leadership just the edge it needed to go into a war mode against a much larger, but more disorganized neighbor, China.

Is it any wonder then that China learned a lesson from Japan, and after the war and the communist revolution which followed, made forced schooling a number one priority. Sauce for the Japanese goose could be sauce for the Chinese gander. And so the Prussian mental battalions invaded and conquered China as they had Japan, the United States, France and the British empire before it.

The best public school students were subsequently trained to be change-agents. In China these public school student change-agents were trained to spy on their parents' deviance in thought, word or deed.

Chairman Mao reversed customary authority relationships between old and young, using students to spearhead state-generated social change among Chinese adults during the "Red Guard" period of the 1960's.

And only a short time after Mao made use of children as change agents, we find the practice imitated in the United States when American courts—not American legislatures—authorize child access to birth-control devices and abortion without knowledge or prior consent of parents. Here was a subtler way to out-Mao Mao, to bypass the stumbling block of family, to place the baton of social leadership into youthful hands. Nominally, at least, because in actuality children who disobeyed the State were not treated gently.

All this was done in the name of rational common-sense and a strangely perverted idea of scientific "liberty"—as if the trade of your mother for condoms could ever work out to your ultimate advantage.

So much for Asia. In 1922 a schoolteacher came to power in Italy, a man who had studied and respected Gaetano Mosca, a man who read John Dewey and believed with Dewey that schoolteachers "were high priests of the true God." Benito Mussolini's ideas received rave reviews in the American press for well over a decade, but his popular acclaim was as nothing to the adulation Il Duce was showered with from American academic heights. College professors and social thinkers/leaders loved the man!

For many years it was Italian fascism that American policy-makers, including the entire apparatus of American progressive schooling, sought to emulate—that historical phenomenon partially explains the prominence of Mosca and Pareto in the best circles, even today. And now I'm going to say something strange: it's too bad we still don't think that way because Fascism, being inherently pragmatic, not religious, "only" sought to command the *behavior* of its followers, not their inner consciousness.

This was its fatal flaw. Let a private consciousness develop and it will always find a way to sabotage and overthrow oppression. As early as 1949 George Orwell, the level-headed critic of all national socializations, saw that Fascism was insufficient to impose lasting order on a State: some *stronger medicine* was needed to control hyperdemocracy, some more efficient principle of domination than force and physical intimidation.

Thus it was that after the Vietnamese debacle of the early 1970's, American schooling turned more and more to a much more profound type of behavioral control, a brand first explored in Bismarck's Prussia derived from the work of Wilhelm Wundt, Hermann Ebbinghaus, Emil Kraepelin, Oswald Külpe, Axel Oehrn and Hugo Munsterberg.

This Prussian incorporation of psychological speculations and experimentation into the early training of the young was intensified in the National Socialist Germany of the Third Reich and the Soviet empire of Joseph Stalin in the twentieth century. Both employed elaborate psychological strategies of student indoctrination which aimed at total ideological transformation. Germany and Russia stressed ladders of absolute authority and utter subservience to a group standard. Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi party philosopher, wrote that the task of the 20th century was "to create a new type of man out of a new myth of life."

During these formative Nazi/Soviet years, on the American side of the Atlantic, John Dewey and his associates were saying almost the same thing, in almost the same words. It was uncanny.

Jane Addams, a close personal friend of Dewey, and in her own right a very wealthy, socially prominent woman whose experimental Chicago settlement house was enjoying international attention at the time, put the case for national schooling this way in a letter to Dewey in 1935:

> The individual must be subordinated to the larger social group. The individual has little importance. The nation is moving from an era of individualism to one of collective associations. The concept of social control through mass psychology is a necessity. The goal is the construction of a universal village that will obtain an organic control over all life. The play impulse in children, carefully regulated and channeled, will breed a group mind and prove an important substitute for police action.

Whoa! Did you hear what I hear in those sentences? Jane Addams and Vilfredo Pareto were buzz words of the New Deal in 1935, but the public was ill equipped to understand just how new this deal was supposed to be. "Police action"? "breed a group mind"? "control over all life"? "construction of a universal village"? "control through mass psychology"?

What does this sound like to you? Did Alfred Rosenberg write this to Hitler or Jane Addams to John Dewey? I think you might begin to understand why some liberty-loving folks were so upset when public schools began to desensitize children to historical thinking and comparisons. You might even begin to suspect the motives for doing this were what used to be called "Machiavellian" when people still knew how to read. And what to read. And why to read it.

In German national schooling, requirements were substantially weakened for the masses, just as they had been in the heyday of Bismarck's Prussia. Psychological material was infused throughout the curriculum to replace intellectual material. Great stress was placed on schooling as a preparation for work, not a training of the mind. This had constituted the original Prussian logic of mass schooling; it had given Prussian industry world-class power. Now Nazi Germany was returning to the primal design. As pragmatism waxed—for what else is habit/attitude training than collectivized pragmatism—critical thinking waned.

In Germany, the Chancellor was practicing exactly what Jane Addams was preaching in America. Nor did the German executive have to go very far to find out what that was. His mentor, Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengel, was half-American, a Harvard graduate, an excellent young man who had been, oddly enough, a house guest of Franklin Roosevelt in Hyde Park, and also a houseguest of Teddy Roosevelt in Oyster Bay on successive weekends. Did you know that? It's a strange world, is it not?

Herr Hanfstaengel followed interesting developments in the States faithfully, like our covert medical sterilization program against mental defectives, and reported them to Hitler. Over Hitler's desk hung a full-length portrait of Henry Ford, the world's most famous anti-Semite, and on a table under the Ford painting both books by Edward L. Bernays on thought control stood. Henry Ford, author of *The International Jew: World's Foremost Problem*, but known more generally as an automobile manufacturer, had become a personal hero of the Chancellor during the 1920's by distributing at his own expense a copy of *Protocol of the Elders of Zion* to every library and school in the United States.

From German national schooling the ultimate masterpiece of national education—until we learned of the Gulag—was painted. Among the most heavily schooled population in the history of the world, millions of Jews and gypsies were systematically slaughtered without any wasted emotion—exactly as if they had been "epiphenomena," which is what German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt had called human individuality.

It was a mass cleansing reminiscent of religious spectacles, like that of the Iraqi troops in retreat across the desert who were turned into cinders only yesterday. But what is most important to remember—so those Jews and gypsies will not have died in vain—is that the population who murdered them could also show genuine delight in fine poetry and music, could add and subtract, and could take orders from their government to beat the band. Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said the Second World War was the inevitable result of high quality universal national schooling: not an unfortunate result, an inevitable result. Do you have some reason to disagree? Would you have handled that kind of power more humanely? Forgive me if I call you a liar.

Our final specimen of national schooling to be examined here, although in doing so there are many ripe examples we have to overlook like Indonesian national schooling and the blessings it conferred on East Timor, or French national schooling and its enlightening effect on Algeria, is that of the Soviet Union.

The recent collapse of the Soviet State lets us see exactly what Soviet schooling accomplished for its society. Nothing in Russia worked except the weaponry. Standing in breadlines occupied forty full working days a year, even though Russia was the world's largest grain producer. Who would waste human time this way except the desperate who figured better this way than in conceiving a revolution?

Wake up. Why would any political state be bothered to keep its population happy when discontent can be punished through the apparatus of the Gulag? Wake up. Is your experience with any élite class, including university professors, any different than this?

Dissidents in Russia were held in check by state of the art surveillance technology, formidable control technologies, and the nation had not had any religious or ethical sanctions by 1993 for at least 70 years. Who could resist by some magical internal code? No one. That's what rational logic dictated.

The Soviet national mass could be controlled entirely by scientific pragmatism using psychological sanctions. That's what the best thinking, and the most generously endowed research, had asserted was true since 1779. Two hundred years of the finest rational problem solving that human history could afford.

Then, the whole thing came apart in five years like our own Vietnam War. How could so many intelligent men have been wrong?

What could this horrifying refutation of rational life mean in relation to Democracy or the greater value, Liberty? Who should the rich be hiring to lecture them now?

If I were rich, and hoped to remain so, I would not be a friend of the leviathan forces seeking to centralize our school enterprise outside of public oversight. What could it possibly foreshadow that an un-elected élite could drive North America in radical new directions without public approval? Or even simple awareness? If I were rich I would be much more worried about my friends than I was my enemies.

I think all that I have said means this: whether we are rich or poor, we have had our children taken away from us by ideologues. We are going to have to take them back.

Whatever that takes.

"LIFELONG LEARNING": A HOLISTIC VIEW
by Nathaniel Needle

The term "lifelong learning" is gaining popularity. But what does it mean? In our society, young learners are separated from adult learners. As young people, we passively receive instruction delivered by schools. Schools are huge institutions in which students and teachers have little opportunity to enjoy life fully or to contemplate its meaning. In school, and in society generally, we are taught that life is a competition for "success," which means economic affluence and social status. We are told that we must succeed in formal, "approved" educational programs in order to succeed in life.

Now we are learning that our dependence on such programs does not end with youth, but must continue throughout life. As adults, we "shop" for more education as individual consumers isolated from one another. Perhaps we do it out of our desire to get ahead, or out of our fear of being left behind. But our pursuit of individual status and security may leave us dissatisfied. So in order to make our lives more complete, we shop for even more "lifelong learning": language classes, sports classes, music lessons, and so on. We become very busy indeed. But perhaps we have still not uncovered life's purpose, or discovered how to enjoy life fully in this present moment.

When we pursue "lifelong learning" in this way, what assumptions are we making about our learning and our lives? Here are ten assumptions about "lifelong learning" that we might do well to question:

- The best way to learn is to pay a lot of money for an educational "product": a course, a seminar, a video or tape series, a workshop, a degree, a diploma.
- Valuable learning requires licensed professionals, expensive media and materials, and special locations. Learning without these is not so valuable.
- The best learning takes place within pre-planned, atomized units in fixed sequences of "courses" or "workshops."
- Your status, ability to get a job, and personal sense of accomplishment should depend on the courses of

study you *complete*. Taking only as much as you need or want from a course is not respectable.

- The value of learning does not depend on friendship between the students, or on any relationship between them outside the course.
- Valuable learning is pursued only with other adults of similar status, and does not include anyone who is not a "consumer": children, the very old, the sick, the imprisoned, the poor, or the disabled.
- Students (and sometimes even teachers) have no reason nor right to share in decisions about the content, price, or institutional context of learning (for example, how the school or business is managed or where the money goes). They can only choose to buy or not buy.
- There is no dimension of life that is not best learned by consuming this kind of "product": child-raising, marriage relations, sex, diet, even religion or spirituality.
- One can never have enough of this kind of learning.

Let me explain that I do not object to anyone paying a professional or school to learn through a course or other program. (Right now, I am teaching a seminar about alternative education!) But relying totally on such "consumer" learning to further one's life goals or nourish one's spirit is like relying totally on vitamin pills to nourish one's body. Holistic lifelong learning, on the other hand, relies heavily on daily life activities, deep and varied interactions among people, contact with nature, and a popular culture which is abundant, diverse, profound, and cheaply accessible to all. Most importantly, a holistic approach to lifelong learning relies on developing some kind of face-to-face **community** of friends and neighbors who **co-operate** in order to share the essential burdens and delights of life:

- raising and educating our children
- caring for our sick and elderly
- maintaining our private homes and shared facilities
- making money, as well as the things we use money to buy
- expressing our creativity and expanding our knowledge
- preserving nature's beauty and variety

- conserving natural resources, and using no more than our fair share
- helping others in need, both near and far
- healing our own emotional and spiritual troubles
- wondering deeply about the meaning of life, and connecting with the great mystery of the universe which surrounds and includes us

Perhaps our family is large enough to fulfill our need for community. Perhaps we can belong to several communities at once, with each one fulfilling some aspect of this need. There is no single perfect model. Nonetheless, any healthy community must be based on **mutual respect, not control**. When we learn within community, it is like getting our nutrition from fresh whole wheat bread instead of from vitamin pills. Even if the "bread" is so delicious that we don't think about the "nutrition" (that is, the "learning"), it is there anyway, thoroughly mixed into our complete life.

A holistic vision can **include** some "consumer" learning. Ideally, within a holistic context, consumer learning plays the same supplemental or specialized role that vitamin pills might play within a healthy diet of good food. But consumer learning increasingly **dominates** our society. Our economic life, our social status, and our sense of personal satisfaction are all coming to **depend** upon this kind of learning. As a result, we are **not** learning how to cultivate community, and so we are missing the relationships and responsibilities which are truly basic to an aware, healthy and secure life.

Let me propose another list, this time of ten "ingredients"— my own recipe for a balanced "diet" of holistic lifelong learning. The ideal mix of ingredients will be different for each person, of course - that's part of nature's variety! The mix will also change throughout one's life, with some ingredients being absent altogether during some periods. Even if some people live an entire lifetime without tasting some of them, they will still be enriched by a culture built upon all ten. There is no question of prescribing what any single person should do with his or her life. A holistic lifelong view of learning is a flexible view, an individual view, and a **long** view. But over time, I suggest we keep the following ingredients in mind:

- Learning relationships in which **FRIENDSHIP** can grow. Sometimes these may involve money, and sometimes they may not. But the teacher should have an interest in the learner which extends to the learner's whole life, and to his or her whole growth as a human being throughout his or her life. It is wonderful if such a friendship can go both ways.

- Learning relationships between people of **DIFFERENT AGES AND GENERATIONS.** At every point in our life cycle, we have something precious to learn from someone at every other point. These relationships should be based on mutual respect. At age 41, I certainly can learn much from my baby son, my teenage English student, and my older neighbor down the street, but only if I take time to do so. Let me extend this idea a little further to include learning relationships between people in **DIFFERENT LIFE SITUATIONS**, which may include, for example, people in hospitals, prisons, or people without homes.
- Experiences which reveal and develop each person's **UNIQUE TALENTS**. These are a basis for each person's most special contribution to his or her family, friends, and community. They are also a path upon which each person encounters the mystery of nature's power within himself or herself. When we learn with these aims in mind, there are no "failures", since difficulties only increase our self-knowledge. We can't allow time for this process if we are always trying to master what we (or others) think we must learn in order to "succeed."
- Participation in a **CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT TO MEET SIMPLE ECONOMIC NEEDS**. This can be done by producing what is needed directly, as when we grow vegetables, take care of children, or make clothing together. Or it can be done by making something for sale, like artwork, or music, or even an educational program! What is important is the experience of direct ownership in one's economic efforts, coupled with the experience of working with others on a basis of mutual respect.
- Participation in a **CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT TO CREATE AN ORIGINAL CULTURAL LIFE.** For some, this may mean putting on a play; for others, it

may mean just swapping jokes. But it means taking a break from Disney and all other "packaged entertainment" in order to put our own talents to work. Scientific experiments, building a sauna, reading stories, making music: all of these can bring us together to look at the world through each other's eyes, and through the "eye" of our common humanity.

- Participation in a **CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT TO BE AWARE OF, MAKE OTHERS AWARE OF, AND ALLEVIATE SUFFERING.** A life spent avoiding the suffering of others, trying only to improve one's own powers or status, is hardly a life of learning. We can address suffering at any level: healing psychological wounds, improving our cities, protesting the actions of national governments. We can also try to lead the world in a less harmful direction by recycling and conserving resources. It may be hard to make these kinds of efforts alone, but when acting in concert with others, one receives more than one gives.
- Participation in **DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING**. This may take place in your family, your workplace, your environmental action group, your school, or all of these. But the decision-making power must be real, without any secret powers reserved for some person or small group who control things from behind the scenes. Otherwise we cannot learn the responsibility that comes with freedom. This is as true for children as it is for adults.
- Time to **RELAX, PLAY, AND FOOL AROUND**. Maybe you will do this by yourself, or maybe with others. Maybe you will do something that requires concentration, like chess or tennis. Or maybe you will just wrestle with a child, or take a nap, or watch television. Maybe you will break a few rules that you are usually careful about. Whatever you do, there does not have to be any reason for it except having fun!
- Time to **DO ONE'S OWN THING**. Naturally, this can be fun too (just like everything else in this recipe!). But the essential thing is to do something without thinking of your responsibility to anyone but yourself. We should do this, of course, in order to balance all the

times we **are** being responsible for others. So you may want to climb a mountain, or travel, or cook, or practice music, or read a book. At other times, you can help someone else to have the time to do his or her own thing, and the circle will be complete.

- Time to **KNOW ONE'S TRUE SELF**. Who am I and why am I here? Is it really true that I am one with the whole universe? How can I know this for myself? Each person has his or her own path to the truth. Those who have gone before us have left guideposts: meditation, attentiveness, yoga, prayer, communion with nature, service to others, and more. This is not something one can learn in a seminar, although one may receive useful inspiration there. It is something we must each do alone, and yet it makes so much difference to be supported by others who are doing the same.

We might say that the first three ingredients on this list have to do with ***learning*** knowledge and skills; the next four have to do with ***doing***, or social action (getting things done), and the final three have to do with just ***being***. Of course, they all penetrate each other, and any life experience may touch upon many ingredients at once. The purpose of community is to support each person in following his or her own recipe, or balance of ingredients, as that recipe changes with time. As we develop this kind of community, we can fill the gap in our social, economic, and spiritual experience between the tiny nuclear family and the large organizations which govern so much of our lives. In this way, we expand our sense of being "at home" in our world at the same time that we nurture the feeling of being "at home" inside ourselves.

I think we need to strengthen our experience of community in order to put the "consumer" approach to lifelong education in its proper place. I can't resist making one more analogy to eating: If you prepare and eat most of your meals at home with family and friends, a restaurant meal every so often is very nice. But when healthy adults eat in restaurants most of the time, while children (and other "non-consumers") are fed separately in mass cafeterias, something is missing no matter how good the restaurants are. When the "consumer" approach becomes the spice in our diet, the extra dose of vitamin C, or the occasional "night on the town;" we will be closer to a whole and healthy life, with no one left out.

Nat Needle lives and teaches in Kyoto, Japan, at the International University's Learning Center. Before marrying a Japanese woman and moving to Japan, Nat taught for many years at Clonlara, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Before THAT, Nat founded and ran a splendid alternative school, New Salem Academy, in New Salem, Massachusetts, for several years. And before THAT, Nat got his degree in education from the University of Massachusetts. He has run workshops on the creative uses of humor at a very popular summer workshop program called Rowe Camp, is a great ad lib comedian, plays honky-tonk piano brilliantly (in fact, has supported himself that way), knows every Tin Pan Alley tune ever written, and is marvelous with kids of all ages, including his own Asa-chan. In short, here is a man for all seasons!

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Poet, teacher, sheepherder, philosopher, mourner over the human condition and the earth that supports all life, Bill Kaul writes for us quite often, words which sometimes bite, sometimes sing, sometimes reverberate, sometimes grate—but always evoke an unforgettable image of whatever he is focusing upon! Bill's home, New Mexico, has THREE minorities: Native American, Latino and black—and is as rich in poor folks as Maine, unless I miss my guess. Very few people who are with any of these people on a regular basis in either state seem to care about them! I found the same thing to be true in Maine when we used to live there. One day I hope to have an equally eloquent spokesperson for the submerged, the mistreated, the exploited, the neglected children of Maine. In many ways, rural poverty is worse than urban poverty, as Bill's words so eloquently mirror to us:

RECEDING YET AGAIN. THEN DISSOLVING INTO IMAGINARY GELATIN

a chapter following,

So, Are You a Teacher or What?

by Bill Kaul, Waterflow, New Mexico

Many of us have two jobs, two jobs for which we get paid, that is. I have two jobs, paying jobs. But we all have more, many more, than two jobs, "unpaying" jobs. Are they jobs, or not? Well, the IRS doesn t think so. They get to define "job."

Somebody gave them permission. I guess it was us. Or perhaps a large corporation, a corpus "body," but of the Frankenstein-type, not a regular old body like us folks have. Anyhow, like many folks these days, I work two jobs. For money. And while I'm there, I have fun. or as much fun as the law will allow. Professional fun, at least until that dreary gray depression sets in caused by sharing sorrow or seeing hills of problems like lizard tails humping off into the mist, no end, amen.

The first job is the regular, "steady" job I was always suggested to have and become, my current "steady" job. The people I see at my other job are adults. They have enrolled at the local community college because they want to improve their chances of getting a job that might actually pay the bills. They are going "for" something. One woman tells me, "My husband killed himself last year, didn't leave any insurance, and I got five kids living in an RV, while I make $4.75 an hour at a convenience store. I'm in school for computers." (This means she is studying for an AA degree in some sort *of computer* skill.) Another tells me he is in school "to go for a nurse." Another "for teacher's aide." And so on. Very job-description-oriented.

Unfortunately, I teach writing and literature; that is, the "humanities" (as opposed to the inhumanities?). Neat little disciplinary compartments. Nobody—well, almost nobody—goes to this school "for humanities." They end up in my classes because they are required to assuage the vocational institution's nod to the well-rounded Liberal Arts education.

Somehow, they seem to enjoy these classes in spite of themselves, especially as they discover that they *enjoy* arguing, speculating, teaching, exhorting and all the myriad other expressive modes of writing and literature. I mean, I could explain to them how these skills will make them more employable, better and more suitable grist for the corporate mills, but—heh, heh—I don't. I let them think it's just *fun*. It is, you know, and really more likely to make them more disgruntled with the corporate idea of life fulfillment than to enhance their usefulness.

At least to an extent. Because it comes back to money. They have kids to support. and tales of woe surrounding unfaithful spouses, divorce, murder, bankruptcy, tragedies of all types and descriptions. They have tales of woe related to their own upbringing. (I am privileged to hear these tales by virtue of teaching writing; these are popular topics, a chance to get their story on paper.) These tales, they know and believe, can only be given happy endings by making more money, by getting some economic and social power, by *climbing the ladder of success.*

Some people can ride the elevator of success, of course. No need to climb. These are the ones who are groomed for success by virtue of birth and position, or combinations *of* circumstances which make them particularly tasty morsels for the tables of corporate America.

Virtue is, indeed, its own reward, *if* the virtue is of a type valued. Honesty is not such a virtue, particularly honesty about one's own needs or feelings. Neither is compassion, especially in an era when we can write seriously *of* "compassion fatigue."

But this is all a well-known social myth. No need for me to retell it.

Those who can't make it very far up the ladder are searched for defects and of course many are found, hence explaining their failure to climb very high or desist from falling. Others refuse to climb at all. Their refusal is seen as sloth. Theyre quitters, set up to fail. No place to go. Compassion fatigue. (How come no anger or blame fatigue?)

And these folks in this school *will succeed.* They will "go for" and become "nurse," "teacher,' or "mechanic." They will *earn the title.*

And the first rung of the ladder will be theirs, leaving me with the taste of an imagined candy-coated turd and the wisp of a notion, "Was the work I did with them *good*?"

Wittgenstein used his propositions as a ladder to climb, and having reached the apex, one kicks away the ladder and beholds the ineffable. A fine mystico-philsophical climb. But, on the ladder of success, what is *the apex*? And what is the view from this apex? Perhaps the CEO, standing at the top of the ladder of success, surveys the domain below, the throngs of clamoring peons. and says simply, "Ahhhhhhhhhh." Or perhaps, like my old buddy "Bart,"[*] the CEO is so eaten up with spastic desire there is no rest, no "top of the ladder."

An important question because meanwhile, back down the hill below the ivory towers, in the bowels of the town, looking down from the apex of success a new history unfolds like a surprise tissue-wrapped present... and it holds a lesson, because ... as the media howls about abortions and welfare mothers and Jesus, we (as a case in point) look at...

II. The Story of a Youth Organization

Scene: A youth organization down the hill in a town which has previously regarded this organization and its facility as a kind of recreational club (especially athletics) for good kids. Not many teenagers, because with teenagers come trouble. This town, for better or for worse, is growing. Progressive elements on the board of this organization want to reach out to kids who are "at-risk," especially teenagers (you know, the ones roaming the streets crazed on drugs and hormones, their red-eyed howls trembling the living room windows of the good folks hunkered down in front of their blue-glowing TV tubes, afraid to venture out into the night and confront these acne-scarred demons). Someone is hired to reach out to them, and does so. (I have watched this process. The person hired is a pretty good guy.)

---

[*] A retarded institutional resident whose accidental death occurred because of his obsession with sweet junk food. Bill wrote his story in a previous issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ.*

These kids, with all their problems trailing behind them like an obscene umbilical cord, come in to see what's happening, or are forced to come because they don't have any other place to go; or probation officers and social workers haul 'em in. Problems begin *to* surface: fights, drugs, bad attitudes toward authority, smoking, etc... Panic ensues. The "good kids" won't hang around. The "good parents" won't send their kids to the facility any more. "We must keep *out* this bad element," other members of the board say. And there's the humanities lesson, because it begs the question: Out, pray tell, of where? These kids *are US. And we are them.*

Safety is needed for all, according to Maslow (right after food and such, I think) so there must also be a safe place for those who have run out of other places. Safety and guidance. Safety and compassion, discipline and caring. Heck, maybe even a little food. There is, after all, plenty to go around, at least judging by the dumpsters and all the folks with full baskets. Do that—share food. Enough to go around; everyone gets a bite.

Or something. Do things, in fact, go "around?" Whatever goes around, comes around. Around what? A table? Everybody included at the moveable feast of the American Round Table... *everyone?*

"Everyone Welcome," the sign on the church says. But, when tested, do they *really mean it?*

There was—is still, I suppose—a neighborhood in Albuquerque, New Mexico that was opposed to a group home for troubled, substance-abusing teens being located in its environs. The 'NIMBY" (Not In My BackYard) syndrome, I believe it has been called by the press. Admittedly, these kids are problems, having duly been labeled as such by people who should know: social workers, judges, parents, counselors, cops and so on. And they are problems, *I* have no doubt, walking bundles of thievery, knavishness, profanity and disrespectfulness. But hell, they're *everywhere,* in *everyone's* back yard, as far as *I* can tell. (Some folks just pay more to see less.)

I mean. it's like garbage, and the attitude most folks have toward garbage—trash. refuse, effluvia—throw it away. And where, pray tell, is away? (Doesn't matter, as long as it's away from me! ... (some folks just pay more to see less.)

So this neighborhood won their very vocal struggle to keep this group home out of their neighborhood, and, like the garbage hauled off from their curbs, it is now "away." Someplace else. Gone.

But like the garbage, not really gone at all. ... *The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth.* There is no place that isn't *our neighborhood.* It's *all our* back yard. We are responsible, when anyone, anywhere, reaches out.

Now of course, you only reach out so many times. If every time you reach out a helping hand it gets bitten, then it might be time to try a different approach. But dogs aren't born vicious, and neither are children. They bite because they are afraid. Like adult anger, it's a defense against attack. "But I wasn't attacking, *I* was only reaching out a help..." Yes, but the last two hundred times a hand reached out to that being it slapped or pushed or hit, and often said it was "helping" when doing so.

But such suspicion can be overcome, with time and patience and risk. (Are these scarce resources? Especially time... Time=Money, the equation goes. But let's say someone has the time...)

Let's say that with time and patience and risk suspicion is overcome and the being is once again gentled, once again dares to trust, and actually. instead of biting. *takes hold of that helpinghand.* What then—? Ahhh, then the real trouble just *begins.*

Dependence rears its ugly head, then broken trust, and an ever-deepening sense of the world being a place which can only be trusted to take. to deliver pain and broken promises... Then the words from their lips are those like "nothing' and "never again" and "men are all pigs" and "bitches are only good for one thing" and so forth.

It is as if one is creating a family, or a mini-tribe, but without the full emotional and financial commitment of those entities. Establish trust, but then discourage emotional and fiscal ties and urge autonomy. This is "help." If the person being helped sees their needs somewhat differently, that is, if they feel the need for emotional closeness is paramount in their lives, or the immediate need for money, goods. or services is most necessary, or both, can the "provider" give these things? *If* so, to how many? In what quantity? And how prioritized—how needy must the needy be?

In what sense is it possible for those in the "helping professions" (trades, really) to help others? and who is best capable of determining what help is needed?

Everyone, after all, is dependent on everyone else, and upon the earth herself. for life, for happiness, for existential justification and physical satisfaction. We are all co-dependent in some very good and important ways. I certainly am in a co-dependent relationship with mother earth—*I* depend on her and she depends on me, both for continued life and for emotional well-being. In like manner do we all depend on one another for money and support and so forth. How many persons in the helping professions would continue in these professions if their services weren't recompensed?

If the earth didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent it. Or something like that.

At any rate, it's a full-time job with no pay. It isn't of interest to the working poor, or the lazy rich or the working rich or the lazy poor or the downright worthless or those who work two **jobs or those who work no job or those looking for any job** atall, or those who don't know what a job is because they're too busy working...

And I worry about teaching humanities part-time. What a job. Second job, that is. Maybe I'll go back to school. I think I'm gonna "go for nurse." Or maybe "go for CEO."

Or maybe, go for broke.

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REVIEWS:

LETTERS TO VANESSA
On Love, Science, and Awareness in an Enchanted World

By Jeremy W. Hayward
Shambhala, Boston and
London, Sept. 1997
$14.00 (paper)

Reviewed by Frank Houde

Jeremy Hayward maintains that over the last few centuries science has been used to create in our culture a *Dead World* story that pervades our thinking. This story says that our world and our universe are made of lifeless stuff that interacts solely according to the laws of chemistry and physics; that only rational thought is of value and intuition, feelings and dreams are suspect or worse; that only what can be measured, qualified and quantified is reality and all else is superstition and hokum. This *Dead World* story prevents us from seeing that the world we live in is an enchanted place. It tends to make us deny our innate sense of mystery and separate us from our soul and spirituality. In so doing, it renders our lives bleak and poverty stricken.

Dr. Hayward has already devoted much thought and energy to the work of joining science and spirituality and has written several other books on the subject. Early in this one he notes:

> Right from the start I must emphasize that I am not anti-science. Science has been used as the voice of authority against the magical world, yet science can equally well speak for that world. The problem is not with science, but with the way the story of the Dead World has been told, in the language of science, for the benefit of all kinds of other beliefs: religious, commercial, political and so on.

Recently he has become very concerned about how he sees this *Dead World* story affecting his daughter's generation; about how despondent they are at the state of the world and how little hope they hold for the future. He says in his preface:

Saddest of all, young people of Vanessa's generation are growing up deeply hurt, depressed and lost. They see the Dead World, and they hear about only the Dead World from people who should know. Yet in their coffeehouses they talk about something completely different. They know the Dead World is not all there is, but they have little idea how to find anything beyond it. And so many take to hard drugs, or even suicide, in search for something more real. That is why I've addressed these letters to my daughter and her generation: to show a way to go forward and celebrate an enchanted world.

There is one thing that bothers me about these letters to Vanessa. They are about the *celebration* of the enchanted world, yet they have an earnest heaviness about them that belies the joy of celebration. I can't quite put my finger on why this is so. Maybe it's because the author is being so careful to use dead science in proof of the enchantment. Maybe it's simply the author's style. Maybe it's because of a father's too fervent wish to show his child a better way. The volume I'm reviewing is marked, "Advance Uncorrected Galleys." Whatever the reason for its tone, it's my hope that the author will find his way to make it a joyous celebration before it goes to its final printing.

Here I want to say that though I'm in my sixties, not in my teens like Vanessa and her peers, I've had my own experiences with the *Dead World* story. It was around in its then-current versions as I grew up in the thirties, forties and fifties and I subscribed to it. At times I would sense that something was missing from my world, but couldn't fathom what it might be. I believe I was saved, early on, from feeilng more "hurt, depressed and lost" because I was unconsciously connected with the "enchanted world" by my love of some of the things I was doing in life. It wasn't until I was in my mid-thirties that I began to get inklings that there was much more going on around me than I had been conscious of. Gradually, through the gateways of Native American and other spiritual practices and through contact with good friends who know about the "enchanted world" I have begun to see that I had a very attenuated view of reality. Re-discovering the life and energy in things I had held to be lifeless and the mystery and sacredness in the everyday world have brought me a sense of richness and joy.

I applaud Dr. Hayward as, through these letters, he works to help his daughter and the rest of us who read them, to see the enchanted world. Regardless of style this is a valuable book for all ages.

TIMES SQUARE RABBI, *FINDING THE LOST HOPE IN CHILDREN'S LIVES*

by Yehudah Fine
1997 Hazelden, Center City, MN
245 pages (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

There was once a young street priest who spent his days and nights ministering here in Albany's worst ghettoes. He would go on to become the Catholic Church's youngest bishop, thanks to his reputation for fearlessness and compassion in the face of the most terrible circumstances. I'm quite sure Bishop Hubbard would readily agree with Reb Yehudah Fine's conclusion, one so finely presented in this beautifully written and very readable book, that life's most important lessons often come at its darkest hours.

They named him the Times Square Rabbi because, like Bishop Hubbard, Reb Fine felt called to work where he sensed the most extreme human neglect; in his case, the center of Manhattan's prolific sex and drug trades.

Ostensibly this a story written for and about young people in crisis. It was published by Hazelden, which specializes in promoting the work of the Twelve Step movement. But really it is a book for all of us; for, these days, don't we all, to one extent or another, struggle with staying connected to the deeper parts of ourselves and then to a Source even greater? Isn't learning to find meaning in the suffering life inevitably presents each of us an essential part of growing up, of acquiring true wisdom?

Yehudah's spiritual teachers have been his flock of lost Times Square souls, primarily adolescent runaways. Their poignant, often painful, stories are interspersed throughout the book with the Judaic teachings which have helped him to keep his own body and soul together while he practiced triage in his one-man spiritual emergency room—the mean streets of New York City. Yehudah's guide throughout has been Maimonides, the great twelfth-century rabbi who codified in his fourteen-volume *Mishneh Torah* the oral teachings of Judaism and the wisdom of the great sages. Therein Yehudah came across a subtext called the *Hilchos Teshuva*, or *Path to Meaning and Hope*, and its principles became his spiritual map.

Teshuva presupposes that at one time or another in our lives, we each find ourselves feeling distant or estranged from God. And this is precisely what launches us into our own personal spiritual quests, which every spiritual system known to humanity presumes is our primary reason for being here in the first place.

One might expect this collection of vignettes about abandoned, abused, addicted, sick and even dying adolescents to be depressing, a real downer. Quite the contrary; instead, here is a profound story of redemption and hope. All of the young people whom Yehudah jumps into the cesspool to rescue are somehow able to use the energy of their individual crises to propel them along a path of self-forgiveness and ultimately towards God, or whichever name one feels most comfortable with in referring to life's divine source.

Using the stories of individual young lives as compelling illustrations, Fine slowly lays out his own eight-step program which is the end-result of a total immersion in the *Hilchos Teshuva* and the degrading midnight culture of Times Square. Beginning with the first step, which he calls "Hurling out the pain," and ending with "Falling in love with life," Yehuda presents the reader with a model of inner healing which is all at once profound, deeply spiritual and universal.

And this is also the story of an extraordinary man. Spiritual teacher, therapist, crisis counselor, father figure, family man, Yankees fan, Yehuda Fine is a rare find in a world which seems to care less all the time, especially where young people are concerned. He is no ordinary rabbi, no ordinary social worker and no ordinary therapist. He is able to reach kids whom no one else can because he is a combination of all of the above. Here is a glimpse of how he meets them where they really live:

> With that she started crying. Big, loud, messy, beautiful sobs and tears. Just knowing that it was okay to unburden some of the wounds burst her open. It's painful to see, but wonderful to experience. The pain had been building inside her for years. Now she was going to lance the source of her infection, allowing all of the pus of abuse, neglect and vio-

> lation she had endured to ooze out through her sobs and tears. In its place would be a new gauze of clean emptiness with which to build real self-dignity for herself. It hurts.

With there being so few answers in sight to the alienation and artificiality which are such viral by-products of our modern corporate/consumer economic and political system, and with an ever more rampant materialism eroding the spiritual basis of American culture like a flash flood through the desert, this book needs to be discovered and read widely. Amen.

THE PARENTS' GUIDE TO ALTERNATIVES IN EDUCATION

by Ronald Koetzsch, Ph.D.
1997 Shambhala
Boston and London
$17.00 (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Hold onto your hats, in 244 pages, this unusual travel guide to American education zooms past—count 'em—thirty-two different types of approaches to the subject. It's the ultimate panoramic view of what's out there, just the thing for busy parents who need to know at a glance the range of available options for their kids.

Each of the book's subsections consists of a brief description of one alternative based on personal visits and interviews by the author. Last year Ronald spent several hours at our school, the Free School in Albany, NY, which was founded by *ΣΚΟΛΕ* publisher, Mary Leue. His account is balanced and fair; and like everything else in the guide, a bit too brief and simplistic. But such is the built-in limitation of such a comprehensive guide.

So that parents can learn more about a particular option, each section contains a listing of schools, resources and readings having to do with that alternative. A final section provides tips on how to choose the right school for your child or even start your own school.

Claiming that roughly thirty-five of the nation's forty million schoolchildren attend public schools, Koetzsch begins with a quicky overview of public education in the United States, its history, philosophy and methodology. His view is fairly neutral and his analysis somewhat naive; however, he does linger long enough to point out two of the cornerstones of compulsory schooling: the Calvinistic belief that children are fundamentally lazy and immoral unless convinced otherwise; and the factory model which was the brainchild of the Industrial Revolution. Koetzsch explains how the schools readily took up the task of preparing and indoctrinating the next generation of assembly-line workers. He then offers the contrast of two "dissenting voices," what he terms the "Humanistic-Progressive tradition" and the "Religious-Traditionalist movement." The author goes to great lengths not to offend anyone throughout these handsomely presented pages.

The Parents' Guide to Alternatives in Education covers options which range all the way from homeschooling to Islamic Schools, from Carden schools to Christian schools. And virtually everything in between—a full third of the selections this reviewer had never even heard of. This alone made the book interesting reading.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN, EDUCATION, NOT SCHOOLING

by Dr. Bob Smilovitz
1996 Morris Publishing
Kearney, NE

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

An old sixties' radical, Dr. Smilovitz is still out there fighting for his vision of a true, community-based system of public *education,* not schooling (emphasis his). In 1965, he and his wife opened a storefront tutoring center, and voter and consumer information center in inner-city Bridgeport, Connecticut. This was followed by a stint with a local college-without-walls program. Together, the two experiences gave Smilovitz a feeling for the kind of community-based, non-compulsory educational model for which he argues so passionately in this eighty-nine page, sixties-style polemic.

Here is a sample of his vision:

> In seeking a viable community-based public system of education, which will provide life-long learning opportunities for all, we need to to visualize debureaucratized schooling as providing self-motivated, non-compulsory learning, instead of employing "certified" teachers to compel learners to find the time and will to learn. Also, such a system will provide each learner with new links to the world instead of channeling all learning opportunities through places called school. To bring this about, our focus would first be on the invalid factors that underlie the system we know as school: *student age, compulsory attendance and a relationship between certified teachers and captive students* (again emphasis his).

Pretty strong stuff from a man who went on to become a state school and hospital administrator, public school teacher, principal and superintendent. Like fellow long-time insider John Gatto, Smilovitz now advocates the outright dismantling of the system which for so long sustained him—and by any possible means, including sabotage from within. Unlike Gatto, however, Smilovitz gives us few clues as to just what he has in mind. He is equally sketchy with his design for his new system of public education, and just how it will be financed. In any event, this reviewer, a fellow shameless optimist and wishful thinker, fully shares his dream and hopes it can be somehow brought to life one day.

On several scores I find myself parting company with Dr. Smilovitz, if only briefly. For instance, he says that the public school system is going to crumble soon. As much as I, too, wish this were so, I just don't see it happening. American social and political institutions have long since shown themselves to possess an amazing survival ability to adapt to public criticism. The public schools have been in so-called "crisis" for nearly forty years now and still they continue to bob and weave adroitly with "innovations" like magnet and charter schools and "shared decision-making teams."

Secondly, I fail to share Smilovitz' messianic notion of education as a form of salvation. It seems to me we've tried that already and look where it's gotten us. Don't get me wrong here; I am a career teacher and a life-long schooler and thus value learning very highly; but no way can I any longer wrap my mind around the idea that some publicly financed and controlled system is going to create the kind of world Dr. Smilovitz and I together want to bring about.

As the streaks of grey broaden in my beard, so does the cynicism in my thoughts. And at this point, the anarchist in me can only see systematized radical social change as an oxymoron. Furthermore, my experience says that schools always have and always will simply mirror the larger society. It seems to me there is a telling absence, in Smilovitz's solution to the problem of education, of any analysis of how things got to be this way in the first place, in the manner of Illich or later Gatto. According to those two students of American culture, there are fundamental historical, political and economic reasons why we have exactly the schools we have today; and so it just won't do to preach a Clintonesque vision of a new America. Not that I don't totally agree with Smilovitz that we can't give up trying to change things; because, as he so correctly states, to do so would be to slide forever into a state of despair and hopelessness. It just seems to me that he has yet to entirely shake loose from the public school rhetoric he was once paid to defend.

Does this reviewer have the answer? To quote the magic eightball, "Ask again later." And before I close, it must be said that Dr. Smilovitz has worked more than one miracle during the course of his long and varied career, creating positive change in people's and communities' lives wherever he has gone. The words of men and women who have truly walked their talk need always to be heeded.

HOW TO HANDLE BULLIES, TEASERS AND OTHER MEANIES: A BOOK THAT TAKES THE NUISANCE OUT OF NAME CALLING AND OTHER NONSENSE

by Kate Cohen-Posey, M.S., LMHC, LMFT

Rainbow Books, Inc.
P.O. Box 430
Highland City, FL 33846-0430

Reviewed by Ellen Becker

This book kind of sneaks up on you. Aimed primarily at children, at first it looks glib and light-weight, but it has some serious advice to offer in a subject rarely treated in print.

Layout, presentation and publicity are somewhat misleading. The book made me nervous when I first started reading it. I felt it took too light an approach to potentially serious situations. The pictures on the front are a little goofy. The publicity is misleading: the book says on the back that the contents of the book cover, among other things "explosive anger, dangerous situations." However, the fact is: it does not. A brief statement, actually a disclaimer in the front of the book, says that the book covers painful but harmless name-calling, and that for more dangerous situations, other strategies may be needed. That statement helps put the book in proper perspective and relieved my sense that it might be inviting children into danger.

Two sections that the author places in the back are genuinely helpful in approaching the book and opened me to its usefulness. I suggest to the reader that these sections be read first. In section "Afterword and Acknowledgment" the author talks about how her personal experience lead her into this book. She relates how she stumbled onto the approach she uses here when her mother suggested to her that someone teasing her might want to be her friend. Just knowing that helped her make that person into her friend.

In another small section entitled "Information for Parents" she has a brief and sound discussion of conflict among children and what parents' roles should be. She states: "Peer fighting is actually an important part of growing up. Children are learning how to negotiate conflicts with people their own age. This is a much different task than handling conflicts with adults." Again later on she says," For the most part, the seemingly cruel world of fighting, teasing and name calling must be the child's battleground. Parents should do little more than help their children 'lick their wounds' and understand the forces with which they are dealing." These two pieces of wisdom are worth their weight in gold and could help many parents approach conflicts between their children and siblings or classmates in a way that truly supports their growing skills in dealing with others.

The body of the book starts with a description of what circumstances most likely have caused children to become bullies, meanies and teasers. In this way she points out that there is a person behind all this behavior who might consider behaving differently. In all the suggestions that follow, and there are many, she describes her basic aim as being that of trying to talk to the person inside the bully. That is a very sound concept and one truly worth directing a child's attention to and one's own for that matter. All of her suggestions are aimed at trying to reach that person by doing something surprising, unconventional, inquiring, maybe even humorous in nature and basically come from a kind-hearted space. She offers numerous dialogues, suggested responses, etc. Three chapters are devoted to the various suggestions. Chapter Three starts it off with four basic techniques which can be used when a child is in a good, centered frame of mind. Each one takes some application to get what she's driving at so I won't summarize them here. She even has a specific approach to use for outright remarks of prejudice, clearly having suffered some herself. She suggests a technique she calls "Golden Nuggets," that is, showing interest in what the person thinks and trying to find something good about it. (You have to read the dialogues.) A later chapter offers a suggestion if the insult stings and side-stepping it or inquiring won't do.

Finally, in the last chapters she offers a way to get children started. Her approach is practical. She has a section where you can practice what you've learned in the book by filling in the blank with your own response to an insult she provides. She is interested in helping children keep going once they get started in this approach. To that end, she suggests that children join together in a club, keep a chart of how they're doing day by day in using these approaches, and discuss with each other what they did and what they could have done in situations that stump them.

Although the format of the book clearly aims it at kids, I think a motivating adult would be the key to getting something like this started. I believe this book could to be genuinely helpful to parents who used it to support their children, when they came with stories of troubling encounters.

STUDENT WRITINGS SECTION:

I decided to leave this contribution of my granddaughter Anna's in the format in which she gave it to me, because I think changing the font or the formatting would have diluted its flavor, just as I believe the spelling Anna has used is more expressive of her intent than a uniformly conventional spelling might have been. I mean, if e e cummings can do it, why can't Anna? Think about it, you English teachers, okay? I say this because her teacher gave Anna a very bad grade on this material—or the part of it Anna had submitted to her.

Three by Anna Leue:

DRAGONS

Dragons. Green Dragons, Red Dragons, Blue Dragons, Purple Dragons, Gold Dragons, Brown Dragons, Rainbow Dragons. Dragons of all colors, Dragons that are all colors. Gleaming Dragon scales and flapping Dragon wings fill the sky. Can any creature, alive, extinct, or imaginary, even begin to compare to Dragons? Of course not!

First of all, Dragons can fly! Soaring through the sky on great wings. Can you imagine what that would be like? To sit on a Dragons back, the wind in your face, the beat of the Dragons wings in rhythm to your hart? I'd like to see an Elephant beat that!

Then, of course, is the whole shape and size of Dragons. They come in all colors and sizes, from bigger than a house to small enough to sit on your hand. They can have long, thin bodies, or bulkier ones. They can have long necks and tails, or short ones. There is infinite possibility. Great shiny scales or thick hides, these great winged beasts fit everyone's ideals. Hardly the case with field mice!

Don't forget about fire birthing! What other animals can you think of that can spout white hot flame fifty feet in the air? Really no animal can even begin to make a stand against this burning characteristic.

Even this small sample of the many great characteristic of Dragons clearly shows how infinitely superior Dragons are to other life forms. Surely Dragons must be the greatest creatures ever created in mind or in life. May they never be forgotten, those high flying creatures of myth, Dragons.

OWN MISTRY [MYSTERY]

Chapter 1

The moon shown brightly on the fresh snow. In the forest a shadow moved. It detached itself from the black mass of trees and came flowing over the field. The figure sped, running, running, running for safety, running for its life. Another figure emerged from among the trees. As fast as the first figure ran, the second ran faster. It came ever closer, black in form and deed. For a minute the pair ran, but all too soon the shadows met. Something flashed in the moonlight, lighting up a cruel, horrid face full of anger. Then there was a scream, a terrible scream, the sound of an unwilling life being torn from its body. As the figure fell to the ground, the sound of the limp body hitting the snow seemed to echo off the surrounding hills. For a second the form of the murderer stopped and leaned over the body of its victim. Then it was gone, disappeared into the shadow of the trees, leaving the body of its prey lying in the snow. A red stain spread slowly from the motionless form. The black of shadow, the white of snow, and the red of blood. Black, white, red. *Black, white and red.*

Sarah Benhold was working at her desk in the detective branch of the police department on the Saturday morning when the call came in. When she had joined the police force ten years ago she hadn't thought there would be so much paperwork. When the call came in, she would have taken any excuse to take a break. She had been three weeks without a case, and she was desperate for some excitement.

"Hello. This is the Goldenbird detective department, can I help you?" The sound of the secretary answering the help line was something all the detectives had trained themselves to listen for. It usually meant a case for someone. "Just a second, I'll put you right through." If the call was being transferred through to the chief then it must be important. Sarah glanced about the room and saw that everyone was sitting straight and alert. It had been a pretty boring week. Only Carry Fisher was working on anything, and that was only a petty theft case.

Carry reminded Sarah that so far in her detective career she had been assigned only petty thefts and minor crimes. Was it too much to hope that the boss had finally noticed her?

"Samson!" The boss' loud voice echoed around the room. Jon Samson, a wonderful detective with a knack for getting out of sticky situations, stood and went immediately to the boss' office. If he was putting Samson on the case, the boss must think it important indeed.

A few minutes later the boss and Samson came out of the office looking grim. "We have a murder on our hands." the boss reported sternly. "I want the whole department on this immediately. Number one priority. I'm putting Samson on the case. You will all be briefed on the details later. For now, know that two people have been reported dead in the last half hour. One could be a possible suicide but the other is definitely murder. I want Benhold to help Samson on this. That's all."

Sarah couldn't believe it. Her emotions were at war, and her common sense seemed to have evacuated along with every intelligent thought she had ever had. She was going to be on a big case, a really big case, with Jon Samson! And yet it was such an awful thing that had happened to bring it around. Murder! To think that there was a murderer somewhere out there in peaceful old Goldenbird. The thought gave her the shivers. but now was not the time for emotions. Now was the time for work.

Skeleton View of the Rest of This Story:
[Sorry, but that's all you're going to get! Ed.]

Sarah and Jon will find many clues and meet many people, one of which will be a Mr. Bomesmier, a wealthy business man who at first seems to be perfectly innocent but further investigation will result in Jon and Sarah attempting to break into his office to find proof of his guilt, But it will turn out that it wasn't him at all, but his secretary who has even more to gain from the murders then the boss. During this whole thing there will be several more murders and Jon and Sarah will end up falling in love.

POITREE [POETRY]:

Simile: The wind tore at me like a hurricane.
Metaphor: The man towering over the boy was a mountain towering over a small town.
Onomatopoeia: bang, bam, boom, crash, ping.
Alliteration: The slippery silver snake slipped through the simple shack.
A definition of poetry: Poetry is emotion. It is a short expressive piece of humanity. It is dreams and wishes and observations, fears and joys, all those feelings that it is so hard for people to talk about.

Poems by Anna Leue:

Tanka

Muddy, mucky, mushy, mud.
Glucky, blucky, yucky, mud.

I hate mud, so slushy and so brown.
why couldn't all the mud just dry up.
then I would be happy.

Limerick-

There once was a boy named Huck.
He had never played with a stick or a puck.
Then he got terribly sick.
His friends all said, "that was slick."
He had the worst luck.

Quatrain-

A rose
Smells so sweet
  o your nose
But not to your feet.

Haiku-

Wonderfully wet
warm shining ripples spread from
My summing body.

Cinquain-

Peacock
terribly vain
strutting around
he is so terribly proud
Beautiful

Acrostic-

P oetic
E ternal
A live
C ultivated
E phemeral

A Poem is so difficult-

A poem is so difficult
to write
sometimes I think that I should write
About light
Or night
Or birds in flight.
But then I discover there is no
rhyme,
No rhythm, no beat, and no time.
This poem is not worth a dime!
maybe I should write about a lime!
Or a cat! yes, cat rimes with hat, and sat,
and bat, and fat.
Yes, I will write about a cat, and that is
that.

THE POI TREE-

It sits up on the hill,
surrounded by a dense forest,
overlooking the poets hall.
It has bark of silver and leaves of gold.
Every day the poets come to honor the great
tree.
To those worthy, the tree grants
great inspiration and eternal life
through the minds of those who read their
work.
In return, all who put emotion on paper
through verse and rhyme will remember it.
It's name will be written a million times
by those who use it's gift to man kind.
May all remember
THE POI TREE ---

Here's a snapshot of Anna and Jon Bliss watching kids play in the water of the second brook at the Witch's Cave during the Live-out last summer.

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And here's our Paul watching for little brown brook trout at the same enchanted spot

ADVERTISEMENT:

In printing the publishers' back cover summary for the following book as is, I am trying out a theory I have about mothers. I am curious to find out whether or not I am right. It is my belief that the instinctive awareness of mothers (and sometimes fathers), when their children speak of having lived before, that they are speaking about their authentic experience is more widespread than many women dare to acknowledge publicly. If this is true, and you'd like some commonsensical support for that instinct, do please write me for a copy of this book (at a wholesale rate), to be ready for mailing as soon as the paperback edition comes out in January! In our spring issue we will publish a proper review of Carol's wonderful book! And if you want stories about our ***own*** *evidence for the reality of past lives as we have experienced them, call me (Mary) at 518-432-1578.*

This issue of children's past lives is, we believe, an essential and mind-clarifying ingredient in the on-going dialogue about the entire realm of childhood that has been left out of the account because of our fear of deviation from the dogma of "scientism!" Reality isn't capturable by the mesh of any dogma! Only the fear of losing control of some vested interest prompts such expressions of orthodoxy, and the realm of science is no less vulnerable to this distortion than any other! Experience is the only test, in the long run. So—if you haven't experienced it in your life, there is no reason to invest yourself in "believing" in the phenomenon! On the other hand, if you have *had experiences of the sort, and have felt afraid of being ridiculed or put down, this book may help!*

From the back cover:

CHILDREN'S PAST LIVES
by Carol Bowman
Bantam Books, NY 1997 (hardbound)

*Fascinating and sure-to-be controversial, this groundbreaking book finally reveals how amazingly widespread—and profoundly affecting—past life memories are in children, while guiding parents toward understanding and loving support.**

Unique and timely, *CHILDREN'S PAST LIVES* traces one mother's discovery of the startling source of her children's fears, and her research showing that many children re-experience their past lives with strong physiological and emotional effects. Bowman's investigation began when her young son, Chase, suddenly developed eczema and a terror of loud noises, with no clear physical or psychological cause. Then, under hypnosis, Chase portrayed himself as an African-American soldier fighting in the Civil War, which he described in such sophisticated and graphic detail as to impress an expert historian. And once he was able to articulate his memories—of the mounting casualties, of the harrowing cannon-fire, of the pain of his fatal wounds—Chase's haunting fears and his eczema completely disappeared.

Astonished, Bowman started polling other parents and was deluged with reports of children's accounts, too complex and detailed to be fantasies, of events they were too young to know about, or even to understand. That outreach became the basis of this compelling book: a compendium of dramatic true-life cases—some involving children as young as two—illustrating the physical and emotional effects of past lives and, even more poignantly, the relief that remembering can bring. If parents are receptive, Bowman learned, children's memories can emerge spontaneously, without hypnosis; and she has developed guidelines to help parents distinguish true memories from fantasies and to listen with the acceptance and love that can promote their children's healing.

Adults' past life memories are well-documented, but as Bowman notes, children's offer more persuasive evidence of reincarnation: "The memories are a window to spiritual realms and witness to the truth that our souls never die." Moving and powerfully convincing, *CHILDREN'S PAST LIVES* will stand alongside the classics of Brian Weiss, Betty J. Eadie, and Melvin Morse in its power to transform our thinking about life and death.

CAROL BOWMAN, who holds a master's degree in counseling, lives with her husband and two children near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

** National author publicity frrm Bantam Books*

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JUST FOR FUN:

THINGS I'VE LEARNED FROM MY CHILDREN
(Honest And No Kidding)
(E-mail humor)

There is no such thing as childproofing your house.

If you spray hair spray on dust bunnies and run over them with roller blades, they can ignite.

Baseballs make marks on ceilings.

You should not throw a baseball up when the ceiling fan is on.

A ceiling fan can hit a baseball a long way.

The glass in windows (even double pane) doesn't stop a baseball hit by a ceiling fan.

When you hear the toilet flush and the words Uh-oh, it's already too late.

Brake fluid mixed with Clorox makes smoke, and lots of it.

If you use a waterbed as home plate while wearing baseball shoes it does not leak—it explodes.

A king size waterbed holds enough water to fill a 200 sq foot house 4 inches deep.

Legos will pass through the digestive system of a four-year old.

Play Do and Microwave should never be used in the same sentence.

Super Glue is forever.

McGyver can teach us many things we don't want to know.

Ditto Tarzan.

No matter how much Jell-O you put in a swimming pool you still can't walk on water.

Pool filters do not like Jello.

VCRs do not eject PB&J sandwiches even though TV commercials show they do.

Garbage bags do not make good parachutes.

Marbles in the gas tank make a lot of noise when driving.

You probably do not want to know what that odor is.

Always look in the oven before you turn it on.

The fire department in San Diego has at least a five minute response time.

The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earthworms dizzy.

It will however make cats dizzy.

Cats can throw up twice their body weight when dizzy.
Quiet does not necessarily mean don't worry.
A good sense of humor will get you through most problems in life (unfortunately, mostly in retrospect).

THESE ARE ACTUAL STATEMENTS GLEANED FROM SEATTLE HIGH SCHOOL TEST PAPERS (also from e-mail):

A student in a science class wrote, "The universe is a giant orgasm" (instead of organism). At the end of the student's essay, the teacher riposted, "Your answer gives new meaning to the Big Bang Theory."
All animals were here before mankind. The animals lived peacefully until mankind came along and made roads, houses, hotels, and condoms.
Marie Curie did her research at the Sore Buns Institute in France.
Men are mammals and women are femammals.
Involuntary muscles are not as willing as voluntary ones.
Cadavers are dead bodies that have donated themselves to science. This procedure is called gross anatomy.
Water is composed of two gins, Oxygin and Hydrogin. Oxygin is pure gin. Hydrogin is gin and water.
When you breath, you inspire. When you do not breath, you expire.
H2O is hot water, and CO2 is cold water.
Artifical insemination is when the farmer does it to the cow instead of the bull.
Mushrooms always grow in damp places and so they look like umbrellas.
A permanent set of teeth consists of eight canines, eight cuspids, two molars and eight cuspidors.
Germinate: To become a naturalized German.
Rhubarb: A kind of celery gone bloodshot.
Vacuum: A large, empty space where the pope lives.

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